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A

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FAMILY COMMENTARY

ON PORTIONS

OF THE

PENTATEUCH;

IN LECTURES.

BY THE LATE

HENRY THORNTON, Esq^{RE}. M.P.

WITH

PRAYERS ADAPTED TO THE SUBJECTS.

SECOND EDITION.



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1843.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE Manuscript, from which the substance of the present volume has been printed, is one of those prepared by the late Mr. HENRY THORNTON, for the instruction of his own household; and was particularly referred to as such in the preface to his “Family Prayers,” the first published of the works, which he had written with that object.

The circulation of several editions of the “Prayers,” and the favourable reception given, at a later period, to another production from this source, the “Commentary upon the Sermon on the Mount,” have amply justified the communication of them to the world. There is reason to trust, indeed, that they have been very extensively useful: and, in the full conviction, that the present work is written in the same spirit, and is devoted, like them, to the glory of GOD, in the

edification of His Church; I commit it to the press, with the humble hope and prayer, that it may receive His blessing.

It is right to add, that the Lectures on the Ten Commandments, were, in substance, contributed by their author—anonymously, so far as the world was concerned—to the series of Tracts entitled “The Cheap Repository,” first published, about forty years ago, by his intimate friend, the late excellent HANNAH MORE.

R. H. I.

Dec. 8. 1836.

P R E F A C E

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN the present edition the portions of *The Pentateuch*, which form the subject of the commentary, have, for the convenience of the reader, been prefixed to the several lectures : and the prayers, corresponding to those lectures, have, in like manner, been subjoined to them, respectively : instead of forming, as in the first edition, an appendix to the general work.

The volume not having been prepared for the press by the author himself, some of the lectures were found, unaccompanied with prayers ; and, in that state, were originally published ; — but, in order to complete the series for family use, without the necessity of referring to any other volume, it has been thought not unfitting to attempt to supply the prayers which are wanting in connexion with the lectures. In the table of contents, the prayers so supplied are marked with an asterisk.

R. H. I.

Febr. 24. 1843.

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OUR FATHER, Which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST, be with us all, evermore. *Amen.*

FAMILY COMMENTARY

ON

PORTIONS OF THE

PENTATEUCH.

I.

GENESIS, I.

1 *The creation of heaven and earth, 3 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitful, 14 of the sun, moon, and stars, 20 of fish and fowl, 24 of beasts and cattle, 26 of man in the image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.*

IN the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2 And the earth was without form, and void ; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light : and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that *it was* good : and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

6 ¶ And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so.

8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

9 ¶ And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so.

10 And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that *it was* good.

11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

12 And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14 ¶ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *He made* the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that *it was* good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the

waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24 ¶ And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

26 ¶ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in His *own* image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said

unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 ¶ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31 And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here an account of the creation of the universe: the simplest, yet most interesting of all records: very brief, yet very comprehensive: and conveyed to us by the authority of God the Creator.

We find ourselves living on this globe: but we

know not, except from this revelation, how it was made; or at what period. The reason which God has entrusted to us, might, indeed, show that the universe must have been made by Him: but we could not learn, except from the Bible, which is the oldest of all books, at what time, or in what manner, GOD had created the world. It was made about six thousand years ago. The earth, at first a rude heap, was reduced to a state of order; the beasts were then formed; and afterwards, man. The house, as it were, is first built, and set in order; and then, the inhabitant is placed in it. The beasts, having been created for the use of man, were expressly put under him. Let man have dominion, says GOD, “over the fish of the sea; and over the fowl of the air; and over the cattle, and over all the earth; and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

Thus the description of the beginning of the world is the description of the beginning of order; for the works of GOD are the works of order: it is through the sin of man that they rush into confusion. At the creation, every thing was formed for a useful purpose; for GOD does not act in vain. “And GOD saw every thing that He had made; and, behold, it was very good:” that is, every thing was fitted to answer the end of its creation; for herein goodness consists; and this also is true beauty. There is something delightful in the appearance of universal order and propriety, —

when nothing fails to fulfil the end of its creation ; — when all intelligent beings unite in promoting the common good, without selfishness, without angry passions, without murmur and complaint ; — when they occupy the places which God has appointed for them ; perform the work, which He has assigned to them ; and, at the same time, enjoy the good which He has given to them ; then all may be said to be very good.

Such was the happy state of things at the creation. The world came perfect from the hands of God : — “ God saw every thing that He had made ; and, behold, it was very good.”

Let us here remark the manner in which the formation of man is spoken of, in this chapter. When God made the light, He said, “ Let there be light, and there was light.” When He made the beasts, He said, “ Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind :” but when Moses proceeds to give the account of the creation of our first parents, he observes, “ And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness.”

What a being of dignity, then, is man, formed in the very image of his Maker, and after His likeness ! The powers of thought, of memory, of imagination, of reason, and of speech, are most astonishing ; they bespeak a creature of high original ; they must have been communicated for some noble purpose. But the expression of being made in the image of God seems also to imply, that man was made pure and

holy ; for, if destitute of this moral likeness to GOD, he might, however endowed with bodily or mental powers, have been not improperly said to have been made in the image of the Devil. GOD, then, made man upright (in his degree) like Himself ; as well as endowed him with mental faculties, in some limited measure, resembling His own. Let us learn hence, to respect ourselves, in the proper sense of that expression. Let us respect our divine original. Let us not confound ourselves with the beasts ; who eat, and drink, and then perish. And let us remember, that, as we came from GOD, so we must go back to Him. We have a spark of immortality within us. We are to endure for ever and ever.

In the progress of Scripture history, we shall be taught, how man is fallen from his original dignity ; and how also he is restored to the favour and to the likeness of that GOD, in whose image he was created.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast given us Thy Holy Scriptures to enlighten us in passing through this dark world ; grant us also, we beseech Thee, hearts to profit by them, that we may be made wise unto salvation, and may at length be raised to those everlasting glories, which are at Thy right hand, in Heaven.

Thou art great, O LORD, and greatly to be praised :

from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. Righteous art Thou, in all Thy ways ; and Holy, in all Thy works. Blessed be Thy name, for the goodness which Thou hast shown to the children of men ; Thou hast made man to be a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou hast put all things under his dominion, and hast given him all things richly to enjoy. Thou didst create him, at the first, in Thine own image, and after Thine own likeness ; and Thou didst take delight in blessing him.

O God, we would adore Thy goodness, as well as Thy wisdom, and excellency, and power.

Teach us, we pray Thee, more worthily to magnify and worship Thee ; and to feel more deeply our obligations to Thee, acknowledging our subjection to Thine Almighty power, and rendering up thanks and praise for all the gifts, with which, in Thy good Providence, we are endowed. Unto Thee, O God, be given all the glory of them, for they have proceeded from Thee. Ours is the abuse of them ; but the mercy of the gift is Thine.

We thank Thee, for instructing us in those things which respect our nature and condition here, as well as our state hereafter. O may we seriously consider what we are, and whither we are going ; and may we recollect, that we are beings formed by the hand of God, and made for eternity. And, as we look back to the times which were of old, and remember how Thou didst frame the world at first, so may we look forward also to the awful day of its

destruction, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat: when the earth, and all the works thereof, shall be burnt up; and when we ourselves, together with all nations, and people, and languages, shall appear before GOD, in judgement.

Keep us mindful, O LORD, we pray Thee, while we are passing through this world, of our obligations to Thee, and of our dependence on Thee; and also of the account, which we shall have to render, on the Great Day, of the things done in the body. And instruct us also, we beseech Thee, from the same Thy holy word, in all things which concern our duty here, and our safety hereafter. Teach us every truth which it concerns us to know; that we may not be either ignorant or unstable, so as to be carried away by divers doctrines; but may Thy Scriptures be our rule; and vouchsafe unto us grace rightly to understand them.

Hear us, we beseech Thee, in these our humble supplications. Grant that Thy blessing may be upon us and upon our worship, and upon all the religious exercises in which we engage; and that our knowledge, and our faith, and our love, may abound yet more and more.

These things we ask in the name of that blessed and only Saviour, whom Thy sacred word reveals; and for whose sake we implore the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of these our imperfect services.

Our FATHER, &c.

The grace of our LORD, &c.

II.

GENESIS, II.

1 *The first sabbath.* 4 *The manner of the creation.* 8 *The planting of the garden of Eden, 10 and the river thereof.* 16 *The tree of knowledge only forbidden.* 19, 20, *The naming of the creatures.* 21 *The making of woman, and institution of marriage.*

THUS the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

4 ¶ These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not

caused it to rain upon the earth, and *there was* not a man to till the ground.

6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

8 ¶ And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.

9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

11 The name of the first *is* Pison: that *is* it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold;

12 And the gold of that land *is* good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx stone.

13 And the name of the second river *is* Gihon: the same *is* it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

14 And the name of the third river *is* Hiddekel: that *is* it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river *is* Euphrates.

15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18 ¶ And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, *This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

COMMENTARY.

It appears from this chapter, that God, when He had made man, appointed a trial for him; and though we do not now exactly understand all the circumstances attending it, (for the account of it is given briefly,) yet it is easy to see, that it was a reasonable trial suited to the condition of our first parents, who, in the nature of things, could not be exposed to most of those temptations, which form the trial of their descendants. We may make, in-

deed, the general remark, that many of those passages of the Old Testament, which, at the first view, are the most difficult, are replete with the most important instruction to the humble, teachable, and faithful reader. The LORD GOD said to Adam, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for, in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” There was no hardship in this appointment; since the other trees were sufficient for the food of man. Indeed, we might have presumed that Adam and Eve, in proportion as they loved their Maker, would rejoice in some means of proving their love; and what more easy proof, than that of abstaining from the fruit of a tree, of which GOD had said, “thou shalt not eat of it?”

We all have our trials at this day; and, through the present weakness of our flesh, they have much power over us. GOD gives to us some things richly to enjoy, while other things are forbidden. A man is permitted to eat the food, which is wholesome for him, and to take the rest, which refreshes him. He may indulge his natural affections and inclinations, within prescribed bounds, and in the manner which GOD has ordained;—but there are many things which he must not do; and, in respect to things permitted, he must not carry indulgence to excess. He shows his love to GOD by obedience in this respect. GOD places temptations in our way; in

the same manner as He placed the tree of good and evil within the sight of Adam's eye, and within the reach of his arm. He still requires of man proof of his love. Let us learn, then, to consider our trials in this light.

Let us not think it hard, that, when so many trees were given to Adam, one tree should be forbidden : and let us not think it hard, that, when so many things are given to us, some things should be placed within our reach, which, nevertheless, we cannot touch without sinning. "In the day" (says GOD) "that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." What the term "to die," or "death," meant, Adam as yet probably did not distinctly know. It would, assuredly, seem to him to imply the removal of the comforts which he then enjoyed, and the loss of that happy kind of existence with which he was blest. It would appear to portend his coming under a curse, as an offender against the GOD who made him. Moreover, since man was immortal, the expression would appear to threaten an eternal loss of the favour of GOD : inasmuch as one rebellious act might, indeed, be considered as the beginning of a fixed course of rebellion : it might imply desertion to the side of the enemies of GOD ; it might involve a participation in their fortunes, and also in their punishment.

Two other things are related in this chapter : one is the first appointment of the Sabbath, as a day of rest : the other is the creation of woman, in a man-

ner now mysterious to us ; together with the first institution of marriage. One man only was made, and one woman : and it is said, that a man shall “ leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his *wife*,” not unto his *wives*. The polygamy, which afterwards took place, was, therefore, a deviation from the first law of the Creator. “ In the beginning,” as our Saviour said, “ it was not so.” By this appointment of marriage, all cleaving to any but the wife is clearly forbidden.

Such was the ordinance of GOD in the beginning ; and, like all His other ordinances, it is calculated to promote the happiness, both of the individual, and of society.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art the righteous Governor of the world, and the bountiful Giver of the many blessings which we enjoy, we desire to acknowledge Thy hand in them ; and we pray for grace, O LORD, to use thy gifts, according to Thy will.

We confess, that all Thy commandments are right ; and that Thy law is altogether holy, and just, and good ; and that Thou consultest the happiness of Thy creatures, in every restraint which Thou layest upon them ; so that we obtain comfort to ourselves, while we obey Thy will, and seek Thy glory. We pray Thee to impress on our minds the privilege, as well as the duty, of serving

Thee ; and the reasonableness of denying ourselves, whenever Thou hast commanded self-denial. O show us the folly, as well as the guilt, of sin, and also the misery which it draws after it ; that so we may condemn ourselves the more clearly for every breach of Thy law ; and may, instead of justifying ourselves, justify Thee in all Thy dealings towards us.

O LORD, inspire us with faith, and fear, and love, towards Thee, so that no trial or temptation may seem hard ; but that we may willingly and cheerfully do what Thou commandest, and abstain, for Thy sake, from what Thou forbiddest. May we exercise ourselves in self-denial, persevering herein also continually ; praying often that Thou wouldest keep alive in our hearts that remembrance of our duty and obligation to Thee, which shall make us thankful for what we have, without coveting what Thou seest fit to deny us.

We pray Thee, O LORD, to pardon all our sins in time past ; for we have followed our own will, and have done that which was right in our own eyes, indulging the evil inclinations of our own hearts. We have given way, like our first parents, to unlawful desires ; instead of being satisfied with Thy bounty, and observing the precepts which Thou hast given us : but we pray Thee to restore us to Thy favour, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST ; and to give us Thy HOLY SPIRIT, to convince us of our sins, with all the aggravation of them. O how reasonable are those laws, which we have broken ; how great is that GOD, whom we have dishonoured ;

and how bountiful are those mercies, with which we have remained unsatisfied.

We desire, our LORD, to thank Thee, at this time, for the appointment of the Sabbath ; which, from the beginning, Thou hast set apart to be a day of rest from labour, and to be consecrated to Thyself. Pardon our forgetfulness of this Thy merciful ordinance, so useful to our souls, and in every way so beneficial to man. May we more sacredly set apart that day unto the LORD ; and feel, more and more, the spiritual advantage of it.

We bless Thee also for Thy wise and merciful appointments for the prevention of sin, and for the well ordering of our several relations in life. We pray for grace to submit to Thy will in them all ; and to expect thy favour, only when we walk after the way of Thy Commandments. O may we honour Thee in all things, while we are passing through the world in which Thou hast placed us ; and, when Thou shalt call us away from this earthly abode, may we receive those unspeakable blessings, which Thou hast prepared for them who love Thee, in the obedience of faith.

These, and all other mercies which we need, we implore in the name of our only Mediator and Redeemer, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and is now at Thy right hand, making intercession for us.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The grace of our LORD, &c.

III.

GENESIS, III. 1—8.

1 *The serpent deceiveth Eve.* 6 *Man's shameful fall.*

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden :

3 But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die :

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to

the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked ; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day : and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

COMMENTARY.

WE have already seen, that, when man was made, a trial was appointed for him. It was said “of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat ; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it ; for, in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

We are here informed, in what manner man was tempted to disobey this most reasonable command of his Creator. The tempter, spoken of under the name of the serpent, is no doubt the same, who, in other places of Scripture, is called the Devil ; for

* Gen. ii. 16, 17.

he is the great tempter of mankind; and he is represented in the New Testament, as still going about "seeking whom he may devour*." He appeared to Eve, as we may suppose, in a form convenient to his purpose; and his manner of tempting was artful. He addresses Eve as being of the weaker sex, and as having nevertheless great influence over Adam. He begins by putting into her mind some hard thoughts of GOD; and so it is often now. The Devil tempts men to question the equity of those laws, by which GOD restrains them. The woman, in her simplicity, first answers by a justification of the divine conduct. "We may eat," says she, "of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but, of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, GOD hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." She seems, however, by thus parleying with her enemy, to open the way for his temptations. He seizes his advantage, and replies; "ye shall not surely die; for GOD doth know, that, in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

These words are false; for they are the words of him, who, as the Scripture expresses it, was "a liar, and the father of it.†" They have, however, a mixture of truth in them. Some truth is usually mixed with error; and hence the error is the more easily

* 1 St. Pet. v. 1.

† St. John, viii. 44.

believed. “Ye shall learn to know evil”—was true : this, however, was an unhappy knowledge ; which it had been good for the woman never to have possessed. Her curiosity was excited ; and she did not reflect, that misery would be the fruit of it. How often is this the case ! A vicious curiosity has been the ruin of many a son of Adam, and of many a daughter of Eve. Many children are unwilling, with reference to various kinds of wickedness, to remain content with that happy ignorance, in which their parents endeavour to detain them. They wish to see vice ; in order that they may know what it is. Like Eve, they desire to know both good and evil ; and, as Eve was first tempted, and then ruined, so perhaps are they first tempted, and then ruined. This curiosity, therefore, to know evil should be resisted. Happy are they who are preserved — by retirement, and by the ignorance attending it, — from mixing in those abominations which are so well known by some.

“When the woman saw, that the tree was good for food and pleasant, she took, and did eat ; and gave also to her husband ; and he did eat.” Thus did sin enter into the world. The tempter speaks to the woman ; she parleys with him ; as she speaks, she begins to doubt and disbelieve ; she next looks on the fruit, and sees it to be pleasant ; and then she both eats, and gives it to her husband. Some have wondered, that the consequences of tasting forbidden fruit should be described in Scripture as

so dreadful ; but such persons forget the disobedience against GOD, which was in this act. A small thing, a single word spoken, or a very slight deed done, may prove a man to be a traitor to his King in his whole heart. It may imply the beginning of a rebellion in a land. So was it in this case. Man was now no longer the obedient servant of GOD ; no longer, therefore, did the divine blessing rest on him. He began to be ashamed of his nakedness ; whereas shame had had no place before. He was afraid also of meeting the eye of GOD : and he fled, therefore, from that Being, in whom he had taken delight before.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art righteous in all Thy ways, and holy in all Thy works, who hatest sin with a perfect hatred, and whose will is the universal law of Thy creatures, we acknowledge our guilt in having rebelled against Thee.

We acknowledge, that we are children of fallen Adam, yielding most naturally to those temptations which come upon us ; being subject to the power of the Devil, that prince of this world, who leads us captive at his will. We have not believed Thy solemn truths, nor given due obedience to Thy word. We have many times spoken peace to ourselves, when there was no peace ; and have encouraged ourselves in sinning against Thee. How often

have we deceived our own souls, by obeying Thee but in part ; instead of yielding up our whole hearts unto Thee. How often have we yielded to temptation, instead of resisting the tempter ; and have thus also fallen into grievous sin. How often have we comforted ourselves with a false hope ; following our own vain fancy and imagination, instead of the plain promises, and threatenings, of Thy written word. We confess, O LORD, that we are under Thy most just wrath and indignation, and are without any hope in ourselves. We are ashamed, and afraid, to lift up our eyes unto Thee, for Thou art pure and holy ; Thou hast seen our most secret actions ; Thou knowest all the corrupt feelings, which have been in our hearts ; and all the evil, which in our lives we have brought forth.

We pray, that we may be deeply humbled, through the remembrance of our offences against Thee. But, though we are unable, in our own name, to plead with Thee, and are unworthy, in our own righteousness, to appear before Thee, we rejoice that there is a way opened, through which they, who repent of sin, may still approach their offended Creator, and obtain His favour and His blessing.

O LORD, we thank Thee, for sending a Saviour into the world, to be the second Adam, the LORD from Heaven ; that as, in Adam, all have died, so, in CHRIST, we may all be made alive : and that, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace might

reign unto eternal life. We pray, that, as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so we may also bear the image of the heavenly; and that we may rise with CHRIST, from the ruins of the fall, to that life and immortality, which He hath brought to light by His Gospel. Give us, therefore, hearty repentance, and true faith in Him: may we trust in His righteousness, and in His grace, and obtain strength—from the power of His Spirit working in us—to walk henceforth in newness of life; putting off our former conversation according to the deceitful lusts; and living as those who are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead.

Hear, O LORD, these our prayers, and maintain in us an active faith throughout this day; that we may walk worthy of our vocation, exercising ourselves in all those tempers which become the Gospel of CHRIST; and doing Thy will, with cheerful and ready minds, as those who are accepted in Thy well-beloved Son.

These our humble and imperfect supplications we present in the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The grace of our LORD, &c.

IV.

GENESIS, III. 9—24.

9 *God arraigneth them.* 14 *The serpent is cursed.* 15 *The promised seed.* 16 *The punishment of mankind.* 21 *Their first clothing.* 22 *Their casting out of paradise.*

9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

11 And He said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?

12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art*

cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

16 Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

17 And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life;

18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve ; because she was the mother of all living.

21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

22 ¶ And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil : and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever :

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So He drove out the man ; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

COMMENTARY.

ONE of the greatest difficulties, which occurs to the human mind, is to account for the trouble and sorrow which we find in the world around us. "Is the GOD, who made us, a benevolent Being? Why, then, has He caused misery so dreadfully to abound?" They, who have seen much of life, are the most disposed to this complaint. Misery, it may be remarked, not only is the direct conse-

quence of some sin committed ; but it is in many cases, even without our own sin, unavoidable. We are all in a measure exposed to trouble : and some are doomed to very great calamity and pain. Who can exempt himself from sickness ? Who can escape labour and trouble, as well as disappointment and vexation, as he passes through life ? And who can avoid the pangs of death at last ? Who has not suffered through the loss of dear connexions and friends ? Even infants (whom we cannot charge with actual sin) are among the number of the sufferers. Pain, therefore, is interwoven with our condition. That it should be so, may, to the careless, the profane, and the self-righteous, in one word, to the natural man, seem unreasonable ; yet it is a fact felt by all ; and, therefore, practically believed by all.

But how is this entrance of misery to be accounted for ? The chapter before us affords some information on the subject.

Adam our first father having thrown off his obedience, and Eve our mother having been partaker, and indeed first mover, in the transgression, a curse was denounced against them. “ Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children ; and thy desire shall be to thy husband ; and he shall rule over thee.” Here is a special curse on the woman ; which ought to be considered by the female sex as a perpetual memorial of that first

sin of Eve, which the Scripture records: and also as an indication that all the daughters of Eve have followed her in their transgression; for all are become sinful, both in nature and in practice. “Unto the man He said:—cursed is the ground, for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it, all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread; till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

What a melancholy state does that of man appear, when the curse under which he lies, is alone presented to consideration! The ground, on which he treads, is cursed, on his account; hard labour being now necessary to overcome its barrenness. He cannot obtain the bread necessary to support life, but by the sweat of his brow; and when he has obtained it, in sorrow does he eat of it, all the days of his life; and he then returns to the dust from which he was taken. Man was not thus subjected to death, when he was first created. He was made capable of living happily and for ever. Death entered, when sin entered: and, together with death, came all the pangs of death, and the fears of it; for these also make a part of the curse.

There is, however, a remarkable passage, in this chapter, which affords a gleam of hope: for the LORD GOD is represented as also saying to the serpent,—“I will put enmity between thy seed, and

her seed : it shall bruise thy head ; and thou shalt bruise his heel." No sooner did man fall, than this merciful promise was made : a promise, indeed, dark and mysterious ; but challenging, even from the first, man's humble faith and trust. It is a short promise concerning the coming of CHRIST. He was the seed of the woman, being descended from Adam and Eve, according to the flesh ; and He was to bruise the serpent's head. Now the strength and venom of a serpent are in its head. The head, therefore, of " that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world *," — the great tempter and seducer of mankind, — was to be bruised ; that is, his power was to be broken ; and an enmity, or controversy, was to be raised between the seed, or children, of the Devil, and the seed, or children, of the woman. The Devil was to bruise the heel, or posterity, of the woman ; but he was to be resisted by One born of the woman, that is, by CHRIST, who should bruise his head, and finally prevail over him.

Let us learn from this chapter two things ; first, the severity of GOD ; and secondly, His goodness : — First, His severity. How dreadful is the punishment of sin ! A whole race is sentenced to death — pain and trouble are brought into the world ; even children are involved in the common misery ; and the earth is turned into a vale of tears. We should

* Rev. xii. 9.

never think of the miseries, which abound in this our globe, without reflecting on the cause of them. We should also derive from this source some conviction of the evil which is in sin; for we make much too light of it. Our chief difficulty in understanding Scripture arises from the want of a sufficiently strong sense of this fundamental point.

But, secondly, let us also learn, from this chapter, to think on GOD's goodness. He tempers judgment with mercy:—He foretells a Saviour, at the very time, when He denounces a curse: and we must attend to Him, both when He threatens, and when He promises. To be unaffected by such a chapter as this, is to despise both His severity and His goodness.

Let us then, on the one hand, acknowledge our fallen state: and, on the other, let us adore that mercy, which is now so fully revealed through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, Maker of all men, GOD and Judge of all; who didst, at the first, create man in Thine own image; and who didst surround him with blessings on every side, pronouncing every thing to be very good; we acknowledge that we are born into a world which Thou hast justly, on account of the wickedness of men, visited with Thy

curse, pouring out upon it the marks of Thy indignation.

We desire to trace Thy hand in all our visitations. Many are the miseries which we see around us, and which we sometimes experience in ourselves. O grant, that all the troubles and distresses, which we meet with here, may confirm us in the belief of Thy Holy Scriptures; and may teach us to know, more assuredly, how Thy wrath has been executed on this guilty world; that so we may seek to escape from the curse which is upon it, — through that promised Saviour, whom, in Thy great mercy, Thou hast also revealed. We would remember, O LORD, that Thou hast declared, in Thy word, that this earth shall be burnt up; and that it is but kept in store until the Day of Judgement and perdition of ungodly men; when those eternal threatenings, which Thou hast denounced on all who reject Thy mercy, shall be executed.

O grant that we may flee from this wrath to come; may we bewail our sins, and acknowledge our unworthiness; may we be affected with our fallen state, and call upon the LORD, with true faith and fear, for pardon and deliverance, in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

We pray for a spirit of seriousness, that we may not be as those who forget how they have fallen from GOD, and who know not the Gospel of their Saviour. Give us minds deeply impressed with a sense of our true condition in this world. Give us

a knowledge of all Thy truths. Bless us with the comforts of Thy Gospel; and deliver us from turning to those deceitful vanities, or lying delusions, to which sinners are prone to flee for consolation, and by which they harden themselves in their iniquity.

We pray also for a spirit of compassion and love to our fellow-sinners of mankind. May we shew forth that spirit in our lives. Do Thou, O Merciful FATHER, pity both the sins and sorrows of the earth; and let the Gospel of Thy SON be sent abroad, as the glad tidings of great joy to all people.

And whatsoever miseries we may, at any time, either experience in ourselves, or behold in others, may they teach us to value Thy Gospel more and more, and to cleave to it with greater steadfastness. May we perceive it to be the balm for every wound, the cordial for every fear, and the full and strong support for the children of men under every affliction and trial.

May the ministers of Thy Gospel, every where, and at all times, declare its truths, and make known its consolations: and may the power of Thy HOLY SPIRIT accompany the preaching of Thy word, and the prayer of faith, and Thy blessed ordinances: that so the hard heart may be broken; the wounded spirit, healed; and the gracious ends, for which the Gospel hath been given, may be fully answered to Thy glory, and to the salvation of Thy people, through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The grace of our LORD, &c.

V.

GENESIS, IV.

1 *The birth, trade, and religion of Cain and Abel.* 8 *The murder of Abel.* 11 *The curse of Cain.* 17 *Enoch the first city.* 19 *Lamech and his two wives.* 25 *The birth of Seth,* 26 *and Enos.*

AND Adam knew Eve his wife ; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering :

5 But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin

lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 ¶ And the LORD said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother's keeper?

10 And He said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment *is* greater than I can bear.

14 Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from Thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

16 ¶ And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

17 And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

18 And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech.

19 ¶ And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one *was* Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

20 And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and *of such as have* cattle.

21 And his brother's name *was* Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

22 And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain *was* Naamah.

23 And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, hear my voice ; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech : for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.

24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

25 ¶ And Adam knew his wife again ; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth : For God, *said she*, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son ; and he called his name Enos : then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here an account of Cain the first murderer, and of Abel, his brother, whom he murdered. Before this atrocious act took place, they both, as we are told, offered sacrifices to the LORD : “ Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock.” Did Cain, the murderer, offer sacrifices ? Did the wicked brother go up to worship with the righteous, and immediately before the commission of his sin ? We have here an awful

instance of the wickedness which may be perpetrated even by him who, as to external appearance, still, like his neighbour, worships God.

A man may have a wicked heart ; and yet may observe the forms of religion. He may repair, with all due gravity, to the place of worship—he may kneel down at the time of public prayer—he may pray at home in the same formal manner ; and yet the seeds of the sin of murder may be lurking in his heart. Let us not, therefore, be surprised, when some, who appear religious, are found to have deceived us, and to turn out the very worst of men. If we had seen Cain offering up to the LORD the first fruits of the ground, which he had tilled, should we not have been deceived? The Scriptures teach us to expect such cases. The attentive perusal of Scripture will prevent our being shaken in our own faith, because religious hypocrites appear.

But let us also take heed, that we do not deceive our own selves. Cain seems to have deceived himself. He doubtless thought, that the offering, which he made, and the worship in which he engaged, must be as acceptable as those of Abel : and because they were not so, he was angry. But why was his service not accepted? the inquiry may assist us in judging—whether our own worship and sacrifice are in danger of being rejected by God. The New Testament supplies a distinct answer to this question ; for it is there observed, “ By faith, Abel

offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain* :” and it is again said, that “without faith it is impossible to please God †.”

Have we then the faith which is here spoken of? Faith means belief; and it is a simple thing. We sometimes perplex the subject by long and laboured attempts to make it clear. Let us endeavour to explain it by the following familiar illustration. Suppose yourself to be bowing the body before some earthly superior; and to be also soliciting some gift—with your lips. Now it is obvious, that you possibly might feel, in your heart, no real reverence for the person whom you professed to honour, and might not even desire the thing which you seemed to ask. Is it not plain, that, in this case, you would but insult the superior before whom you appeared to bend; and that, if he knew your thoughts, he would spurn you from his presence, while another sincere and humble applicant might be accepted? So was it in the case of Cain and Abel. Cain offered sacrifice at the same time with Abel; but he had not the same disposition of heart. Cain did not truly believe in God; he did not feel as a *suppliant*; he made a formal and proud sacrifice. Are we of this spirit? Is not our worship void of faith? Faith is essential to all true worship, to all acceptable prayer. It was “by faith,” as we read in another book of the Holy Scriptures—

* Heb. xi. 4.

† Heb. xi. 6.

“by faith”—that the holy men of old, the fathers of old time, were enabled to render unto God worthy fruits. By faith, Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; and by the faith, which accompanies our offering, will the value of it be tried.

One sin leads to another. When a wicked man is charged with his wickedness, he is angry. Cain was full of wrath, when he found that the offering of his brother Abel was accepted, while his own was not: he therefore rose up, and slew his brother. Let us beware of anger; let us beware, also, of envy. We little suspect how far these black passions may carry us.

It is worthy of observation that the greatest crimes may be committed in a few short moments; and that the bitter consequences of them may remain during a whole life. Cain seems never to have had an easy hour, after this murder. Murder, indeed, is a tremendous crime: God, therefore, was pleased to mark this first instance of it by His peculiar indignation. “My punishment,” said Cain, as he wandered over the earth, “is greater than I can bear.” But though his misery was dreadful, his heart does not appear to have relented: for it is one thing, to be miserable and full of horror; and it is another, to be truly humbled on account of sin. May God preserve us not merely from such iniquity; but also from every approach to it: and may He also grant unto us

that faith in Him, which shall make our worship sincere and acceptable in His sight, through JESUS CHRIST.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast declared, that without faith, it is impossible to please Thee, and who requirest that they, who worship Thee, should worship Thee in spirit and in truth, give us grace, we beseech Thee, as often as we kneel down before Thee, to believe in Thy greatness, Thine excellency, and Thy goodness, and also in Thine immediate presence with us. Thou, O LORD, art the searcher of hearts, before whom all things are naked and open; Thou knowest, whether we are of the number of those who do but mock Thee, day by day, by a formal and heartless service; or whether we indeed feel our wants, and acknowledge our guilt, as well as our dependence on Thee. Pardon, O LORD, all our negligence in times past; pardon all our worldly and wandering thoughts, in every time of prayer, and in every place of worship. We pray, O LORD, for the spirit of prayer, that we may obtain those blessings, which are promised to such as seek them by faith, according to Thy word.

We pray, also, that all our daily works, being sanctified by Thy word, and by prayer, may be acceptable in Thy sight, through JESUS CHRIST. Deliver us, we most humbly beseech Thee, from

those evil tempers, which are apt to rise up within us, and to defile our religious services. Deliver us from pride and anger, and hatred, from envy and malice, and uncharitableness; make us humble, both in Thy sight, and in the sight of all men; and teach us to esteem others better than ourselves, and to watch against spiritual pride; lest, either by exalting ourselves, or by condemning others, we fall under Thy condemnation.

We pray, O LORD, that we may take warning from Thy Holy Word; and may, day by day, be learning Thy whole will concerning us. May the instances of Thy judgements deter us from sin; and may the examples of Thy saints incline us to all godliness. And help us rightly to understand Thy sacred Scriptures, that they may be to us as a key of knowledge, whereby our way may be opened plain before us. Pour out Thy Spirit upon us, that we may know ourselves to be accepted of Thee, and to be built on the same foundation with Thy saints of old, whose faith we profess to follow.

And give us grace, O LORD, especially to look up to JESUS CHRIST, as the great sacrifice for sin, who, in the fulness of time, was offered up; and whose blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel: for by His blood we are justified; and are delivered from the punishment, which we have deserved, and which would indeed be too heavy for us to bear. Grant us, we pray Thee, a true and lively faith in this Thy Son. May we draw near to Thee,

at all times, in His name, renouncing our own righteousness ; and pleading His merits as the only ground, from which our daily sacrifices of prayer and praise can ascend with acceptance to the throne of Thy heavenly grace.

To Thee do we now commend ourselves this day : keep alive in us, we pray Thee, the remembrance of these our prayers ; and as we would pray in faith, so let us walk in faith ; and let the whole life, which we now live in the flesh, be a life of faith in the Son of GOD, who hath loved us, and given Himself for us.

We ask these blessings in the name, and for the sake, of the same JESUS CHRIST, our only MEDIATOR and SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The grace of our LORD, &c.

VI.

GENESIS, V.

1 *The genealogy, age, and death of the patriarchs from Adam unto Noah.* 24 *The godliness and translation of Enoch.*

THIS is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him ;

2 Male and female created He them ; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

3 ¶ And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat *a son* in his own likeness, after his image ; and called his name Seth :

4 And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years : and he begat sons and daughters :

5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years : and he died.

6 ¶ And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos :

7 And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters :

8 And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years : and he died.

9 ¶ And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan :

10 And Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters :

11 And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years : and he died.

12 ¶ And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel :

13 And Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters :

14 And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years : and he died.

15 ¶ And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared :

16 And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters :

17 And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years : and he died.

18 ¶ And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch :

19 And Jared lived after he begat Enoch

eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters :

20 And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years : and he died.

21 ¶ And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah :

22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters :

23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years.

24 And Enoch walked with God : and he *was* not ; for God took him.

25 ¶ And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech :

26 And Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters :

27 And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years : and he died.

28 ¶ And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son :

29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This *same* shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.

30 And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters :

31 And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years : and he died.

32 And Noah was five hundred years old : and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

COMMENTARY.

THE Scriptures afford us but a short account of many long periods of time. This chapter records the names of men whose lives extended over sixteen hundred years. It takes notice, indeed, that “ Enoch walked with GOD ; and that he was not ; for GOD took him.” Enoch was carried to Heaven, without seeing death ; “ having this testimony that he pleased GOD*.” For thus we read in the New Testament. He stood up amidst a wicked world, and reprov'd their unrighteousness. No mention of him is made in any profane history : but the Scriptures number him among those saints, who have gone to glory everlasting.

How many things must have happened in the course of these sixteen hundred years, which men of the world would have thought of far greater conse-

* Heb. xi. 5.

quence than Enoch's walking with God : but the Bible is silent concerning them. It says little or nothing of the kings, and conquerors, and the men of honour and renown, who then flourished on the earth ; their achievements, great as they might then seem, were of little real moment ; and their names have utterly perished.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years, teach us to consider the shortness and uncertainty of our lives on earth, and the ends for which we were created. We brought nothing into the world, and shall carry nothing out of it. In body, we are frail and feeble, exposed to danger on every side ; and, unless supported by Thy Providence from day to day, should day by day perish ; in soul, we are weak and corrupted ; and, unless renewed by Thy Grace, should sink into everlasting perdition. Be with us, O GOD, we beseech Thee ; and evermore sustain and guide us. Direct our steps in life ; and teach us, and enable us, to walk with Thee ; so that, whether our course on earth be short, or whether it be prolonged to the utmost stretch of mortal years, our end may alike be blest ; — and, whether young or old, living or dying, we may dwell — in time and through eternity — in the light of Thy countenance.

In praying for these blessings, we desire to rely not on our own righteousness, nor on any works which we have done ; but solely on the merits of The Lord our Redeemer. O LORD JESU CHRIST, who hast died for our sins, and who ever livest to make intercession for us, teach us to feel, that, while we can do all things through Thy Grace strengthening us, we can do nothing without Thee ; — inspire us with the deepest humility — by teaching us to feel our own nothingness : inspire us with the most thankful joy — by teaching us to know Thy salvation : enable us to be indifferent to the praises and the censures of our fellow-men ; and to look to Thy will as our only rule, and to Thy favour as our only reward : — approving ourselves not to the world, but to Thee ; and continually bearing in mind — that, what we are in Thy sight, that, and that only, are we : — and that, though we may deceive ourselves, as well as those around us, we can never deceive Thee.

O grant us grace to have a single eye to Thy Glory, and to do all things in the consciousness of Thy Presence. In all the states of life, through which we may pass, teach us to feel that we are strangers and pilgrims ; may we never make our home on earth ; but be daily looking forward to the time, when — this earthly tabernacle being dissolved — we shall have a house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Into this house all Thy faithful servants — from the

foundation of the world — have already entered : there Enoch, there Elijah still, and for ever, live with Thee: there all Thy saints dwell ever in Thy Presence. O may we, who have the example of their faith, be admitted — one by one, as we shall be separated from each other on earth — into that glorious communion, through the merits of their Lord and our Lord, and enjoy the rest which remaineth for Thy people for ever.

We beseech Thee to bless with us all those who are dearest to us, and all for whom we are in duty bound to pray. Bless *the children whom Thou hast given to us, and the household whom Thy Providence hath gathered round us.* Bless the Queen, and all in authority under her; *and her Parliament at this time assembled:* and grant that the greatest in this world may feel that their highest honour is to be Thy servants; and that their chiefest privilege is to advance Thy Glory. Bless the whole Church of CHRIST; and, especially, that pure and reformed part of it established in these realms; and grant, that, in all its orders, and in all its offices, it may be guided and governed by Thy Holy Spirit.

These, and all things necessary for us as individuals, as a family, as a nation, and as a Church, we humbly unite in beseeching Thee, O GOD, to grant for the sake of our Blessed Redeemer and Mediator, JESUS CHRIST.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

VII.

GENESIS, VI.

1 *The wickedness of the world, which provoked God's wrath, and caused the flood.* 8 *Noah findeth grace.* 14 *The order, form, and end of the ark.*

AND it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare *children* to them, the same *became* mighty men which *were* of old, men of renown.

5 ¶ And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every

imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

6 And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

9 ¶ These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 ¶ Make thee an ark of gopher wood;

rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

15 And this *is the fashion* which thou shalt make it *of*: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, and the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; *with* lower, second, and third *stories* shalt thou make it.

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven; *and* every thing that *is* in the earth shall die.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every *sort* shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep *them* alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of

the earth after his kind, two of every *sort* shall come unto thee, to keep *them* alive.

21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather *it* to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

COMMENTARY.

THE Scripture here proceeds to describe to us, in the most melancholy colours, the great wickedness which prevailed on the earth—then probably filled with inhabitants;—and it tells us of the controversy, which, on account of so much sin, subsisted between GOD and man. “My spirit,” says GOD, “shall not always strive with man.” Hence it appears, that GOD’s Spirit had been striving with man: and the expression implies, that GOD sets some bounds to the strivings of His grace. We are told, that His patience and forbearance towards His rebellious creatures were still to continue for one hundred and twenty years; and that in this time it was to be tried, whether man would repent. “Yet his days,” says GOD, “shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Some of the expressions here used are very remarkable. So great, it is said, was the wickedness of the earth, that “it repented GOD that He had

made man; and it grieved Him at His heart.” How dreadful must have been the state of the world, to warrant such terms as these! That beautiful Paradise, which GOD had made, and that holy estate of man in it, which we lately considered, were now no more:—not a trace was left! Instead of the sweet incense of sacrifices, and the devout offerings of prayer and praise, every “imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil;” and that, “continually.” Instead of general order and subordination, instead of universal charity and kindness among mankind, as common brethren, and as children of the same Adam, violence now filled the earth. “And GOD looked upon the earth; and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And GOD said unto Noah;—the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence, through them; and behold, I will destroy them, with the earth.”

Noah, it was said, “was a just man, and perfect in his generations;” and like Enoch, he walked with GOD. Noah was just, amidst a world which was unjust. He walked with GOD, while other men were walking after the way of their own heart. Now it is obvious, that, Noah having been used to differ from the world,—to preach righteousness to them, and to account them very wicked,—it would be a subject of no great surprise to him, that GOD should threaten to destroy them, on account of their wickedness. Noah would be prepared, by his perception of the sins

of men, to believe the divine threatenings against them: but the wicked part of mankind, having little or no sense of the prevailing wickedness of themselves and of those around them, would not find it so easy to believe, that a flood was about to come upon them. So it is now. Wicked men will not believe the divine threatenings (in the New Testament) of everlasting punishment to the wicked; for they have no just sense either of their own wickedness, or of the evil of sin, (or of its demerit;) hence they are unbelieving. But he, who now walks with GOD, and has been long used to struggle against an evil world, will, like Noah, credit these denunciations of GOD against the wicked. Such a man, instead of blaming the severity of GOD, will rather admire His patience in so long bearing with us.

GOD orders Noah to make an ark; and Noah, "moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house;" whereby, says the New Testament, "he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*".

It is by believing GOD, that we become interested in all His merciful promises; and it is by refusing to believe, that we lose the offered grace; and are shut up under condemnation. Sin is more connected with unbelief, than men commonly conceive. On the other hand, also, there is more efficacy in faith than they are aware of. All the Scripture saints are distinguished for their faith; they received the testi-

* Heb. xi. 7.

mony of GOD; they believed His threatenings; embraced His promises; and submitted to His teaching: and, though still beset with sins and infirmities, yet, thus believing in GOD, and depending on Him, they were accepted by Him, and are saved.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and eternal GOD, who didst once destroy this world on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants, give us grace to fear Thy judgements; and thankfully to accept Thy promises; that so we may be saved in the great Day of Thy wrath, when Thou shalt again execute vengeance on Thine adversaries.

O LORD, we desire to mourn over the evil which we now behold, in the world: and we pray for grace heartily to strive against it, in ourselves. What vice and wickedness, what war and desolation, what violence and oppression still prevail over the earth, and afflict the miserable sons of men; and what an awful Day of Judgement awaits the doers of iniquity; for Thou hast declared, that all men shall be judged according to the things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. Grant, we pray Thee, that none of us may be led away by the error of the wicked, following sin, and hardening ourselves in unbelief; but may we receive, with humble and thankful hearts, the testimony of Thy Scriptures; and may we flee from the

wrath to come. Deliver us, O LORD, we pray Thee, from the fear of man. Grant that we may never consent to the sin of others, nor follow a multitude to do evil; but may be as Thy witnesses, in the midst of a wicked generation, shining as lights in the world.

And while we resist the corruption around us, we pray for grace also to resist the corruption which is within us, and to watch over our inmost hearts. Deliver us, O LORD, this day, from yielding to any evil thoughts, and from harbouring any sin in our imaginations; lest our minds should be defiled, and Thou shouldest withdraw Thy Spirit from us. Make us careful to please Thee, and diligent to serve Thee, in all things; obeying GOD rather than man, and labouring to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to subdue the whole power of sin.

But since, by reason of our frail and fallen nature, and our own self-indulgence in sin, we are now unable, O LORD, to serve thee as we ought; and since, on account of our many past sins, we are all lying under Thy just condemnation, we pray Thee, of Thy merciful grace, to pardon and deliver us, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. We thank Thee, that we are invited to flee to Him, as that ark in which we may safely rest, when Thy wrath shall finally overtake a guilty world. We pray for that righteousness, which is to be obtained by faith in Him; we pray for a humble trust in

His merits, and a believing hope in His power to save. We pray for grace to walk also in the obedience of this faith, loving and serving Him, who hath so loved us as to give Himself for us, and to become the ransom for our souls. May we maintain, this day, all those tempers, which become believers in Christ. May we live in constant remembrance of our obligations to Him, and in the expectation of His second coming ; and thus exercising faith in GOD, and in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and partaking of the influences of His Spirit, may we live in Thy favour, and in the light of Thy countenance, here, and at length be accepted, in the great Day of our LORD's appearing.

We ask these, and all other blessings which we need,¹ in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

VIII.

GENESIS, VII.

1 *Noah, with his family, and the living creatures, enter into the ark. 17 The beginning, increase, and continuance of the flood.*

AND the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark ; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female : and of beasts that *are* not clean by two, the male and his female.

3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female ; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights ; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

5 And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

6 And Noah *was* six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7 ¶ And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that *are* not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

11 ¶ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark ;

14 They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every

creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him : and the LORD shut him in.

17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth ; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

18 And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth ; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth ; and all the high hills, that *were* under the whole heaven, were covered.

20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail ; and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man :

22 All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of life, of all that *was* in the dry *land*, died.

23 And every living substance was de-

stroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained *alive*, and they that *were* with him in the ark.

24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

COMMENTARY.

THERE are some parts of religion, which are so melancholy, that the mind is hardly able to bear them. It chooses rather to turn away to some brighter and more pleasant part of the same general subject. Thus, for instance, if we reflect on that saying of the New Testament, that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it* ;” if we bring this truth still more clearly home, by considering that many, perhaps, of our own friends, relations, or connexions are in the broad road;—if we then think, also, on the dreadfulness of that condemnation, which shall overtake all the ungodly;—if we thus give our minds to the more melancholy part of our religion, we are ready to shrink from it; and to look, for ease and comfort, to some other, and perhaps to some opposite

* St. Matt. vii. 14.

quarter. This remark is one which very naturally occurs on reading the chapter before us. If we had lived in the time of Noah, and had, like him, been warned of the general flood which was approaching, and had, like Noah, also believed the warning, it is not to be denied, that our life would have been rendered in some degree melancholy by the anticipation of the general ruin which was advancing. We should have had to bear these very sorrowful reflections, as our trial, on the one hand ; but then we should have been comforted, on the other, by the cheerful and thankful thought, to which we should now and then have turned, of the ark, which was prepared for *us*, and for the few others, who, in the midst of so evil a generation, were found faithful. We should have had to weep bitterly over the expected destruction of many a one who was dear to us, and indeed of the world at large. We should most earnestly have prayed for them. We should, each of us also probably, have—from the very urgency of the case—become like Noah,—“a preacher of righteousness*.” Yet, after all, if men would not hear, we should have taken part, as it were, with God, and not with man ; and should have said, — “The LORD is righteous, in all His ways ; and holy in all His works †.”

We are told in the New Testament, that “they were eating, and drinking ; marrying, and giving in marriage ; until the day that Noah entered into the

* 2 St. Peter, ii. 5.

† Psalm cxlv. 17.

ark ; and knew not, until the flood came ; and took them all away*.” The world was going on then, much as the world is going on now. Man is often as insensible of his approaching destruction, as the very sheep or ox is, the hour before the knife is put to it. It is in the nature of men, and especially of united multitudes, to be so. Present things engage them. Moreover, they encourage one another in error. If a thousand men, who stand on our right hand, and a thousand more who stand on our left, do not believe the Scripture, we also are apt not to believe.

Again, because great multitudes *say* they believe, who nevertheless shew by their lives that they do not, *we* are apt to lead unbelieving lives also. In the days of Noah, almost all mankind thought in one way ; and that way was the wrong one. They were all alike careless, easy, and without fear. No flood had as yet happened ; and, therefore, they concluded that none would ever happen ; until the day when “ the flood came and took them all away †.” Let us think, now, on the dreadful consternation and surprise, which must have overtaken these ungodly men. The Scripture does not enter into particulars ; but our imagination may easily paint a variety of scenes. The earth had been filled with violence ; various parties and factions, various sects, perhaps, of religion and of politics,

* St. Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.

† St. Matt. xxiv. 39.

had been contending with each other; but now, they are all sinking in the same common deluge. Many grave but irreligious fathers; many cheerful but ungodly children; many princes, who, in the pride of life, had forgotten the LORD their King; many judges, who had sat in judgement upon others, but were themselves unrighteous; many rich, who had, in their wealth and self-indulgence, forgotten GOD; many poor, who, in their poverty and sorrow, had cursed Him;—all sank under the waves together; for Noah only and his family “found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

But the most awful circumstance attending this story is, that it is not merely to be viewed as an event which is past; but as a warning of a still more tremendous scene which is to come. Our SAVIOUR has compared the deluge to the day of general Judgement. “As it was,” said He, “in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the day of the Son of man: they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all*.” The unbelief shall be the same; the surprise, the same; and the destruction, in some sense, the same also. GOD indeed hath said, that He will no more destroy the earth by water: but fire will be the element, which will produce this future deluge; for we are told, that every thing is to “melt with fervent heat; and that the earth and

* St. Luke, xvii. 26, 27.

all the works thereof shall be burnt up *.” What better use can we make of our expectation of this dreadful event, which the faithful are now looking for, than that which the Apostle suggests: “ seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness † ? ”

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art great, and greatly to be feared, who art the sure hope and refuge of Thy saints, and the GOD and Judge of the wicked, who didst not spare the old world, but savedst Noah, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly, — give us grace, O LORD, so to believe the testimony of Thy word, and so to live under the sense of a still more awful and approaching Judgement, that, when that great Day shall come, we may be found among the faithful flock, who shall enter into life everlasting.

We thank Thee for all the warnings and threatenings of Thy word. O may we be wise in time, foreseeing that evil day, which is approaching. May we be sensible that we live in a sinful world, in which men have corrupted their way before Thee. May we fear to seek false comfort, by dis-

* 2 St. Peter, iii. 10.

† 2 St. Peter, iii. 11.

guising this truth from ourselves, — lest we should have our portion with the wicked. Give us, O LORD, a true knowledge of Thee, that we may awake to righteousness and sin not ; and that we may put away from us all the works of the flesh, and may be content to deny ourselves in this world, that so we may reign with CHRIST in that world which is to come.

We confess, O LORD, that we are sore let and hindered in pursuing our Christian course, both through the deceitfulness of our own hearts, the temptations of Satan, and also the allurements of the world around us. How often, O LORD, have we been ashamed of Thy cause, and fearful of declaring, before ungodly men, even those things which we most surely believe. Yea, how often have we sought to please men, instead of the HOLY LORD GOD ; forgetting our Christian profession, and refusing to endure hardness, as the soldiers of JESUS CHRIST. We pray Thee to give us a more solemn experience, in our hearts, of the power of the world to come ; and, while we eat and drink, and go about our worldly business, may we often reflect, that we are on the brink of an awful eternity. O let us not be faithless, but believing ; may we have our loins girded, and our lamps burning, and be as servants who are waiting for their Lord, looking for and hasting to the coming of the LORD JESUS.

And when our hearts sink with grief at the fear-

ful state of the wicked, give us grace, we pray Thee, to turn our lamentations for them, into earnest prayers for their deliverance : and teach us to watch, each of us, for the souls of others, as well as to be earnest after our own salvation ; that so we may know our faith to be sincere, and all the threats and promises of Thy word to have a real influence upon us.

O LORD, we would call upon Thee, at this time, in behalf of those who are sunk in sin ; and who despise the warnings of Thy word, and take no thought of Thy tribunal, in the world beyond the grave. O grant that their consciences may be alarmed ; and that their sins may now stand up in array against them, lest, otherwise, they should too late discover them, in the Day of Thy wrath and vengeance. Send down, O LORD, Thy HOLY SPIRIT to work powerfully in many hearts, and to excite a holy fear, and awful expectation of the future Judgement.

Have mercy on this sinful nation, who profess to believe Thy truths, while many there are who in works deny them. May we repent of all our sins and unbelief, as well as of our false confidence ; and while we are naming the name of CHRIST, may we indeed walk as He hath commanded us to walk, in all humility and meekness, in all patience and long-suffering one towards another, in all charity and kindness. May war and discord cease ; may all violence be put away from us ; and all wrath,

and evil-speaking, and all malice; and, as it is through CHRIST alone that we hope our sins are pardoned, and our souls preserved unto everlasting life, so may we, who profess the faith of CHRIST, be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD, for CHRIST'S sake, hath forgiven us.

These our imperfect prayers and intercessions, we would offer up unto Thee, with united hearts, in the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

IX.

GENESIS, VIII.

1 *The waters asswage.* 4 *The ark resteth on Ararat.* 7 *The raven and the dove.* 15 *Noah, being commanded,* 18 *goeth forth of the ark.* 20 *He buildeth an altar, and offereth sacrifice,* 21 *which God accepteth, and promiseth to curse the earth no more.*

AND God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that *was* with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;

2 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;

3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth *month*, on the first *day* of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

6 ¶ And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made :

7 And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground ;

9 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth : then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

10 And he stayed yet other seven days ; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark ;

11 And the dove came in to him in the evening ; and, lo, in her mouth *was* an olive leaf pluckt off : so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

12 And he stayed yet other seven days ; and sent forth the dove ; which returned not again unto him any more.

13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first *month*, the

first *day* of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

15 ¶ And God spake unto Noah, saying,

16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that *is* with thee, of all flesh, *both* of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, *and* whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

20 ¶ And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour;

and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

COMMENTARY.

FOR many months was Noah remaining in the ark, before any symptom of the departure of the flood appeared. What an anxious time was this! but at length "GOD remembered Noah;" and the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. When the Scripture says, "GOD remembered Noah," it speaks after the manner of men. GOD had not forgotten him at the time when he was surrounded by the waters. "GOD remembered him" — means, therefore, that GOD *showed* that He remembered him. So it is now. GOD is ever mindful of His servants; though He does not always shew, that He remembers them: but the time shall come, when He, who gave, shall also fulfil His promises; though the believer, like Noah in the ark, may have waited long and anxiously for their accomplishment.

We are called upon in this chapter, particularly to consider the faithfulness of GOD. Noah had

long endured difficulties and trials ; he now experienced the divine faithfulness. For no less than an hundred and twenty years, had he been preparing an ark ; while the patience of GOD waited on the sinners around him. How many hard sayings must he have heard in that tedious interval ! He was probably, as religious men are now, an object of ridicule to the profane. The multitudes of the wicked, instead of respecting his faith, doubtless laughed at his credulity ; and scornfully entreated this venerable man of GOD. They would amuse themselves by looking at the vast building, as it proceeded ; they would smile at the folly, and perhaps suspect the madness, of the builder. But Noah believed in GOD ; he anticipated a day of dreadful judgement upon others, and of his own deliverance from their reproach ; and this faith supported him ; it made him obedient to GOD's command, and interested him in the divine promise.

O how happy will be that time, when the Christian, having, like Noah, walked by faith through this evil world, and endured the opposition of the wicked, shall find the promises of CHRIST fulfilled to his own eternal gain ; when the terrible flood of death and of judgement shall have passed away ; and when all, which has been spoken in Scripture, of GOD's faithfulness to those who believe, shall be realized in the final and eternal salvation of his soul ! Noah was safe when he was in the ark ; he was safe when, through faith, he resolved to enter

into it; but he would be far more sensible of his safety, when he had actually outrid the storm; when the ark at length rested on the mountains of Ararat; when the dove came back with the olive branch in her mouth; and when the dry land appeared. So there is a sense of safety to be experienced in Heaven, which is far beyond any hope or assurance, which even the strongest of believers can attain to here. As yet we are tossed about in a stormy world, and live on the hope that God will prove faithful hereafter. Many smaller proofs of the divine faithfulness may nevertheless be experienced by us, before the wished-for land appears.

Noah, no doubt, was much encouraged by finding every event occur, from time to time, as God had led him to expect. God had instructed him, in the first place, that He would have patience with sinners for a hundred and twenty years; and Noah, therefore, would not be perplexed by the delay. God had directed him to take the beasts, two and two, into the ark; and they miraculously obeyed. God had led him to expect the flood; and, at the set time, the flood appeared. God sent a mighty wind to dry up the earth;—a circumstance which could not fail to encourage His waiting servant.

At length the ark rested; and, in a short time afterwards, the dry land was seen!

Thus the believer has many smaller evidences of the faithfulness of God, in his way through this

world : though the great proof awaits him, in the life to come. We see things to be as the Scripture describes them. The world is wicked ; and this the Scripture affirms : in general, the imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts is still only evil. There are, however, in the world a number of believers who take warning ; and enter into the ark of CHRIST'S Church as the means of their escape. GOD'S judgements often begin in this world to gather round the wicked ; for what are all the wars and tumults, — what are the troubles of the rich, and the bitter complaints of the poor, — what are the trials which light on men of every rank, but symptoms that the wrath of GOD is already gone forth ? The Scripture describes the earth as under a curse, through the sin of man. But far better indications of GOD'S truth and faithfulness are given to the Christian in his own private experience. He prays to GOD ; and he finds that his prayer for grace is answered. He takes the Scriptures for his guide ; and he prevails against his sins, and grows more holy, day by day. The appointed means of grace strengthen and comfort him. GOD'S providence also takes care of him. He trusts, therefore, like Noah, in the faithfulness of GOD, who having guided him with His counsel, shall hereafter receive him to glory*.

* Psalm lxxiii. 24.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who art the Creator and the GOD of all ; who sendest us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons ; and who hast declared, that, while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease ; who crownest the year with Thy blessings, and suppliest, with a most bountiful hand, all the various wants of man : we bless Thee, that, though we are fallen and guilty creatures, yet Thou hast still such abounding mercy upon us, and makest the earth still to be an habitation in which we may dwell in so much comfort ! We thank Thee, that, in the midst of judgement, Thou hast ever remembered mercy ; and hast never failed in Thy promise to those who put their trust in Thee. We bless Thee for our temporal enjoyments, and for the fulfilment of that gracious declaration that Thou wilt not again drown this guilty world, but wilt grant to it a yearly harvest and increase.

But we bless Thee, more especially, for Thine everlasting promises made to us in JESUS CHRIST. We bless Thee for the covenant, which is established in all things, and sure ; and for the hope, which is laid up for us in heaven ; which hope is now the anchor of our soul, while we are living in this troubled world. We pray, O LORD, for

faith to believe all Thy promises in CHRIST, receiving them in simplicity of heart, and placing our whole confidence in them: may we fear no evil; may we dread neither affliction, nor death; because Thou art with us; and because Thy rod and Thy staff shall comfort us.

We pray that the guilt of our sins may be removed, by looking unto Him who was made a sacrifice for sin, and who hath redeemed us with His precious blood. May His righteousness be upon us; and may we be the children of His covenant, interested in all His promises, sustained by His arm, guided by His HOLY SPIRIT, and made partakers of His salvation.

And being thus made the children of GOD, by faith in CHRIST JESUS, we pray for grace also to walk circumspectly, avoiding all appearance of evil. May we be watchful, and self-denying, fearful lest we sin against GOD, or disgrace that holy name whereby we are called, and thus give occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme. O LORD, grant that, if we have indeed embraced Thy cause, professed Thy truths, and made mention of Thy name, we may not dishonour Thee during the remainder of our days, nor fall under the power of our old sins; but may we obtain more and more the victory over them; that so our last days may be our best days; and that, when we come to die, we may leave a testimony behind us of Thy faith-

fulness and truth ; and that our memory may be blessed.

And pardon, we beseech Thee, all the infirmities which still cleave to us ; and though the world should be strict to mark what is amiss in us, yet do Thou, O LORD, freely forgive us, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. Thou, O LORD, knowest all things ; and knowest whether, amidst our various weaknesses, we still truly love Thee. Be merciful, we pray Thee, to our unrighteousness ; and our many sins and iniquities do Thou remember no more : and help us to serve Thee, henceforth, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives.

We ask every blessing, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only Mediator and Redeemer.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

X.

GENESIS, IX.

1 *God blesseth Noah.* 4 *Blood and murder are forbidden.*
 8 *God's covenant* 13 *signified by the rainbow.* 18 *Noah*
replenisheth the world, 20 *planteth a vineyard,* 21 *is drunken,*
and mocked of his son, 25 *curseth Canaan,* 26 *blesseth Shem,*
 27 *prayeth for Japheth,* 29 *and dieth.*

AND God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth *upon* the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.

3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

4 But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the

hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed : for in the image of God made He man.

7 And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply ; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

8 ¶ And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you ;

10 And with every living creature that *is* with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you ; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you ; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood ; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations :

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it

shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud :

15 And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh ; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud ; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

17 And God said unto Noah, This *is* the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

18 ¶ And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth : and Ham *is* the father of Canaan.

19 These *are* the three sons of Noah ; and of them was the whole earth overspread.

20 And Noah began *to be* an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard :

21 And he drank of the wine, and was

drunken ; and he was uncovered within his tent.

22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father ; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

25 And he said, Cursed *be* Canaan ; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

26 And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Shem ; and Canaan shall be his servant.

27 God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem ; and Canaan shall be his servant.

28 ¶ And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

29 And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years : and he died.

COMMENTARY.

IN the midst of judgement, GOD remembers mercy. He often takes occasion from His very judgements the more remarkably to shew forth His mercy. When, in consequence of Adam's sin, the first curse on man was denounced ; then, also, that remarkable promise was made,—that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. When the destruction of the world by water was announced ; then GOD, also, made a promise of mercy to His servant Noah ; and commanded him to prepare an ark for the saving of his house. And now the flood having ceased, GOD returns to the same language of favour to man, which He had first spoken at the creation of the world ; for His controversy with our race seemed now to be no more remembered. “And GOD blessed Noah and his sons ; and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth ; and the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea ; into your hand are they delivered.”

Here is a fresh gift of all the inferior creatures into the hand of man ! Some alteration is, however, made in the terms of the conveyance ; for the animals are now represented as being more under the dread of man, than they were before the fall.

A prohibition from eating the blood of animals is added; "for the blood," it is said, "is the life thereof." For this prohibition there may be many important reasons: probably, it was intended to inspire reverence for the blood spilt in sacrifices; since this was to be typical of that precious blood which was to be shed for the sins of the world.

We have here, also, the remarkable account of GOD's engaging never more to drown the earth by water; and of His setting up the rain-bow, as a standing memorial of this His early promise to the world. GOD in judgement remembers mercy. The rain-bow, doubtless, appeared before the flood; since it proceeds from natural causes: but it now, for the first time, was declared to be a sign between GOD and man; and the sign is most seasonable in its appearance; for, when the rain threatens to deluge the earth, then the rain-bow is also seen.

But the rain-bow is spoken of in Scripture, as a sign of security not from a flood of waters only, but from all the effects of the wrath of GOD. In the Book of The Revelation it is spoken of, as the emblem which surrounds our SAVIOUR; for, in describing CHRIST as sitting on His throne, it is said, "There was a rain-bow round about the throne*." The expression implies, that, as GOD was true to His promise made to Noah, so also would He be true to the everlasting covenant made through JESUS CHRIST.

* Rev. iv. 3.

In Isaiah, GOD's faithfulness to all His people is shadowed forth by the same sign. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn, that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee*." In all our troubles, therefore, let us remember the sure promises of CHRIST. There is a rain-bow shining over every cloud; to which the true believer should direct his eye.

At the end of this chapter, Noah is represented as intoxicated with wine. It is probable, that he was the first who planted a vineyard, and made wine from it; he might not, therefore, have been aware of its intoxicating nature; nevertheless, it is to be lamented, that Noah, a preacher of righteousness,—Noah who had found favour with GOD,—and who, by his faith, had condemned the world, should have been in this disgraceful condition. A partial historian would have been silent on this part of the character of Noah; he would not have discredited his favourite hero: but the Scriptures relate things as they were. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall†."

Let us beware of the beginning of sin. Noah might be intemperate in the use of the wines which

* Isaiah, liv. 9.

† 1 Cor. x. 12.

he had made; and yet the temporary loss of his reason,—a loss, which was the consequence of his excess,—might not have been previously known to him. Happy are they whose moderation is known unto all men: happy are they, who, neither by meat, nor by drink, nor by any thing else, cause their brother to offend, or commit a fault: happy are they who avoid whatsoever men may construe into vice; and may turn to the reproach of religion.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, whose word is true, and whose faithfulness never faileth, whose counsels stand fast for ever and ever, who art not a man that Thou shouldst lie, nor the son of man that Thou shouldst repent, help us, we beseech Thee, to put our trust in Thee, that we may never be confounded. We confess, O LORD, the weakness of all other help, and the vanity of all other hope, but in Thy faithfulness and mercy. O let us not put our trust in any child of man, or in any gift or comfort which Thou sendest us, but in Thyself alone, the Giver. May we believe the testimony of Thy word; may we rely on Thy promises; and thus, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, may we have continual hope.

We thank Thee, O LORD, for all the instances of Thy faithfulness, which have been left on re-

cord for our instruction; and for all the proofs, which the state of the world affords us, of the truth of Thy word; but we thank Thee, especially, for every witness within ourselves, and for every proof of Thy faithfulness experienced in our own souls. If, when we have been in trouble, Thou hast delivered us; if, when in darkness, Thou hast enlightened us; if, when under the power of sin, Thou hast given us grace to break the bonds, by which we have been held; if, under terror, Thou hast comforted us; and if, out of weakness, we have thus been made strong; we thank Thee for these manifestations of the truth of Thy Gospel; and for all the glorious hopes, which the present experience of thy faithfulness brings with it.

We pray Thee, O most merciful God, to remove all the remaining darkness of our mind, by the promised gift of Thy SPIRIT. O LORD, we believe: help Thou our unbelief, and increase our faith. Grant that we may never doubt Thy truths; nor give way to the worldliness of our own hearts, nor to the temptations of the evil One; but may we grow in grace, and in all holiness; and, as we advance in life, may we advance in the true knowledge of Thy Gospel, and in the firm persuasion that its blessings shall be ours. Give us, we beseech Thee, the faith and patience of Thy saints; that we may endure, even as they have done, trusting God, and not regarding man; expecting, that, when we have suffered awhile

here, we shall afterwards receive a crown of righteousness.

O grant that we may never be weary in well doing; but may ever remember, that we have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of GOD, we may receive the promise; and grant that we may not cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; but may we be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the LORD.

And arm us now, we beseech Thee, for every conflict which we may have this day to sustain. May we command our tempers, overcome our indolence, subdue our anger, and restrain our tongues, as well as fight manfully under Thy banners, against those men of this world who would withdraw us from our obedience. May we endure, as seeing Him who is invisible; waiting for the fulfilment of Thy promises, and having CHRIST formed in us, the hope of glory. May we be carried above the trials which we meet with here; till at length, through the multitude of Thy mercies, and through the riches of Thy grace, we shall be brought to that haven of everlasting rest, where all Thy saints shall meet at last, to celebrate Thy praise.

These blessings we ask, through the merits and mediation of JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XI.

GENESIS, XI. 1—9.

1 *One language in the world.* 3 *The building of Babel.* 6 *The confusion of tongues.*

AND the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this

they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

COMMENTARY.

WE have in this chapter the remarkable story of the building of Babel. The Old Testament is brief in the relation of many facts, from which brief relation, nevertheless, much instruction is to be drawn.

The sons of men, having attained to considerable art in building, resolved to make themselves a name. "They said,—Go to; let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven: and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." How great is the resemblance between the character of the men of old,

and the character of men of modern time! National pride is rebuked by this passage. These persons were full of vain glory. They were ambitious to make their name known to the latest posterity; and to be esteemed above the generations both before and after them. While they thought of the honour which would be reflected on them, they were willing to toil: pride made the labour light; and, though the fatigue and difficulty would increase, as the tower grew higher and higher, their vanity would increase also. The labourers seem to have laboured in this case, not for individual fame, but for a share in the general honour: and they probably thought that vanity of this kind was perfectly excusable.

To apply this subject. Every nation of the world is inclined to build itself a Babel. The sons of Adam, though they have been scattered abroad in consequence of this sin, are still intent on making themselves a name.

Many wars are undertaken on this principle; and individuals have accounted themselves to be rewarded for their part of the toil, by their share in the national glory. Cities are built in order that foreigners may admire; and the native inhabitant swells with pride, like these builders of Babel.

But the same spirit actuates us in our private affairs also. We wish to make ourselves a name. Whatsoever we do, is done with the view to human fame: at any rate, many of those, who are least in favour with God, have much of this spirit. Let

us beware of acting with a view to be admired. Let young persons especially be on their guard against this principle; it was the principle of the builders of Babel. Let us not be ambitious to be great even in our own little line; a man may take great pride in a very small matter. His Babel may not reach to the skies; it may be so small, that he alone takes notice of it. He may be extremely vain of his skill in some easy matter; of a little knowledge of that, which thousands know far better than himself; of actions even which deserve blame rather than praise.

God, it is said, confounded the language of these builders, being displeased at their work; and scattered them over the face of the earth. Where is now the name of those men, who expected to be so illustrious? Where is that great and mighty tower, of which the top seemed to reach the heavens? So shall all the works of human pride perish. God shall in the end confound all which has been atchieved, on this principle.

Man is a sinner; and pride, therefore, was not made for man. That a creature of the dust, — a creature defiled by sin, — a creature who has no right to hope any thing but from the mercy of God, that such a creature should be ever occupied in making himself a name, and building a tower which shall reach to heaven, seems preposterous. We know not our true condition, either as sinners, or even as creatures; when we indulge the spirit of

these builders; for we ought to render the glory of every thing to God. Shew me the man who is vain; and you shew me one who knows not his true condition in God's moral world, nor his true place in God's creation: for "what hast thou, that thou didst not receive;—why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it*?" Thine, O LORD, and Thine alone, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, whose alone is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, give us grace, we beseech Thee, to put away from us the sin of pride, and to be clothed with humility. O let not the splendour of any thing which is great, nor the conceit of any thing which is good, in us, at any time withdraw our eyes from looking on ourselves as sinful dust and ashes. We are unworthy to lift up our eyes unto Thee, because we have trespassed against Thee, great God of Heaven. Our being, also, is from Thee; and all the powers, of which we are so apt to make our boast, are given us by Thee, to be used in Thy service. We are hopeless and helpless in ourselves; we owe all which we have to Thee;—to Thee, there-

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

fore, be the praise:— to us belongeth shame, on account of our abuse of these talents, and on account of our continual offences against Thee.

But, though we know that we have no title to praise, we confess, O LORD, that, without Thy help, we cannot overcome the proneness of our hearts to be seeking after it. We pray Thee, therefore, to mortify our pride, by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Do Thou teach us to feel, that we are nothing in ourselves; that all we have is from Thy bounty; and that all we hope for is from Thy mercy. And grant, that we may never deceive our own souls, by having a form of godliness, without any holy temper or spirit; and having a knowledge of doctrines, without any experience of their humbling influence on our own hearts. May we never covet great things, like the children of this world; as if we knew not the precepts of GOD, nor the Gospel of CHRIST. May we never disgrace that holy name whereby we are called, by walking still in the vanity of our minds, having our understandings darkened; but may we, each of us, renounce the honour and praise of this world, and all the proud and ambitious passions which are naturally in our breasts; and may we put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of GOD of great price.

We confess, O LORD, our great pride and vanity, in times past; and our ignorance and perversion

of the truths of Thy Gospel, by reason of the high thoughts which have been within us : for we have been wise in our own conceit. Instead of being teachable as children, and lowly and simple in heart, we have presumed ourselves to be already wise ; and the holy word of GOD, which commands us to be humble, hath been little regarded by us. We thank Thee, O GOD, that Thou hast set before us an example of all humility, in JESUS CHRIST our LORD, who hath also died for us. O let that mind be in us, which was also in CHRIST JESUS ; who, though in the form of GOD, and though He thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. May we learn of Him, who was meek and lowly of heart. May we not seek the praise, which cometh from men ; but the praise which cometh from GOD only : and thus may we be His disciples indeed.

And, as we see that the LORD JESUS CHRIST humbled Himself when He was on earth, and humbled Himself also for our sakes, O may we learn to love humility. May we admire this holy temper in Him ; and, while we admire it, may we be imitating it also ; and grant, O LORD, we beseech Thee, that thus, renouncing our own righteousness, and wisdom, and strength, and putting

our whole trust in CHRIST, we may glory in Him only. Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto His name be all the praise; for He hath washed us, and delivered us from our sins, by His own blood. Worthy, therefore, is the Lamb that was slain; to whom, alone, with Thyself, and the Holy Spirit, be all blessing, and honour, and dominion, and praise, world without end. Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XII.

GENESIS, XII.

1 God calleth Abram, and blesseth him with a promise of Christ. 4 He departeth with Lot from Haran. 6 He journeyeth through Canaan, 7 which is promised him in a vision. 10 He is driven by a famine into Egypt. 11 Fear maketh him feign his wife to be his sister. 14 Pharaoh, having taken her from him, by plagues is compelled to restore her.

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee :

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing :

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him ; and Lot went with him : and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot

his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 ¶ And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite *was* then in the land.

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, *having* Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

10 ¶ And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine *was* grievous in the land.

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto

Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou *art* a fair woman to look upon :

12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This *is* his wife : and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

13 Say, I pray thee, thou *art* my sister : that it may be well with me for thy sake ; and my soul shall live because of thee.

14 ¶ And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she *was* very fair.

15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh : and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake : and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What *is* this *that* thou hast done unto me ? why didst thou not tell me that she *was* thy wife ?

19 Why saidst thou, She *is* my sister ? so

I might have taken her to me to wife : now therefore behold thy wife, take *her*, and go thy way.

20 And Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him : and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

COMMENTARY.

ABRAHAM was the father of the faithful ; that is, he was the first of that faithful, or believing, race, of which the ancient Church was formed : and he is, in a spiritual sense, the father of the faithful, in all ages ; for the same spirit dwells in them, which resided in him ; and he is an example, which they may be said to follow.

Before the call of Abraham, the world, as we may gather from the Book of Joshua*, served other gods, having been generally given to idolatry.

The LORD therefore said unto Abraham, “ Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred—unto a land that I will shew thee, and—I will bless thee,—and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken to him.” The Apostle says, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that “ by faith Abraham obeyed ; and he went out—not knowing whi-

* Josh. xxiv. 2.

ther he went*.” *Faith*, then, was at the root of Abraham’s obedience. “By *faith*, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;” and “by *faith*, Abraham obeyed” the call of God, “and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” He trusted God; he did that which God commanded: and he left to God the consequences.

The manner, in which THE ALMIGHTY revealed Himself to Abraham, is not explained: but we may be assured, that it was sufficient to carry full conviction; and that there was, therefore, nothing unreasonable in his faith.

Let us apply this story. Are we walking “in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham †?” —Then, and then only, are we “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise ‡.” We do not live, like Abraham, among idolatrous neighbours; we are not required to leave a father’s house in order to obey the Gospel; we do not receive the same miraculous call; nor are the promises held out to us exactly the same with those made to Abraham; nevertheless, there still exists a considerable resemblance between Abraham the father of the faithful, and all his children.

Let us in some degree trace this resemblance. We live, though not in an idolatrous, yet in a wicked, world: for the true God is far from being duly honoured and obeyed; although He may be

* Heb. xi. 8.

† Rom. iv. 12.

‡ Gal. iii. 29.

nominally worshipped. A cold lifeless Christianity, producing no peculiar fruits, is the religion of a large part of the present generation. Perhaps, we have relations who come under this description. Some are exposed to bad example in their father's house; and, if they presume to differ from their family and friends, and devotedly to serve the LORD their GOD, they know not to what evils they may be subjected. Even, in these days the entrance upon a religious life is often extremely difficult. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee," said GOD to Abraham. Quit the lifeless form of religion in which thou hast been educated; leave off the sinful customs of thy friends and family, says GOD to us. "But I am fearful of offending them," says the man who is without faith. He does not dare to trust GOD; he shrinks from the consequences of so determined a line of conduct. "If," he says, "I could exactly foretel what would be the influence of my obedience to GOD—on my temporal concerns, I would be obedient." Now Abraham the father of the faithful went out, not knowing whither he went. He had obtained no map of the road, before he set off: and we are left equally unacquainted with much of our future path. We are, nevertheless, required to espouse the cause of GOD; to profess His truths; to do His will; believing, that He will provide for us. "I will bring the blind, by a

way that they knew not ; I will lead them in paths that they have not known ; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them *.”

But though Abraham's faith was sincere, it was not always strong. We read at the end of this chapter, that it so far failed him, that he prevaricated ; and said that his wife was his sister, and not his wife ; by this false prudence, he did but increase his difficulties. Abraham, nevertheless, was faithful on the whole. He both obeyed the call of GOD, to come out from the land of his idolatry ; and he was also faithful in many subsequent instances. So it is with the true Christian. He has left all for CHRIST ; he has devoted himself to his SAVIOUR ; to whom, also, he proves generally obedient ; but his faith may sometimes fail him. If, however, on any occasion he swerves from the straight path ; and fears man, rather than his heavenly Father ; he assuredly finds the consequences to be painful : for it is always an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the LORD our GOD.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art the merciful protector and friend of all them that truly believe,

* Isaiah, xlii. 16.

and who commandest us to put our trust in Thee, and to walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, leaving all for Thy sake, and obeying Thy will from the heart; help us to obey Thy call, and to lay aside every weight, which hinders us in pursuing the Christian course.

Thou, O LORD, hast never failed them, who have put their trust in Thee. Thou hast shewn us, in Thy word, that none ever trusted in Thee, and were confounded. Thou art with them, in life, and in death. Thou ledest them through all the uncertain paths of this world; and Thou bringest them, at length, to Thy holy habitation, to that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD. We are here, O LORD, as strangers and pilgrims, as all our fathers were; we have no certain dwelling-place, or continuing city; but we seek one to come. O give us the faith of Abraham, that, though we know not what is before us, we may go forth, and do Thy will, and may walk in the ways which Thou hast appointed for us. May we live a life of faith, having hope towards Thee and our LORD JESUS CHRIST. May we serve Thee, day by day, with quiet minds, though uncertain what a day or an hour may bring forth. May we wait with patience for the day of our LORD's appearing; beholding, in the mean time, the hand of His providence in all our affairs; trusting that His arm shall lead us; that

His grace shall strengthen us ; and that He shall make all things work together for our good.

But what are we, O LORD, that Thou shouldest thus call us from a state of unbelief and sin, and visit us with Thy salvation? We have not merited this mercy at Thy hands. To Thy counsels, O LORD, and not to our own wisdom, to Thy mercies in CHRIST, and not to our own works, be all the honour given. We have fallen into guilt, and condemnation ; but Thou hast sent Thy Son from heaven to save us ; and Thou hast proclaimed Thy Gospel freely, to our ears ; calling to us to come out from this wicked world, and to repent, and to be saved. O send Thy grace also into all our hearts, that we may heartily obey the call, and may lay hold on that blessed hope of everlasting life which is set before us.

We pray Thee to confirm us in the faith. May the LORD stablish, strengthen, and settle us ; and make us steadfast to do His will ; and, day by day, preserve us from falling. Keep us, we now beseech Thee, this day in all our ways. Make us sincere and upright. May we have the testimony of our consciences, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world ; and while we imitate the graces of Thy saints, may we take warning also by their sins.

Now unto Him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us spotless before the pre-

sence of His glory, with exceeding joy ; to the only wise GOD our SAVIOUR, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The grace of our LORD, &c.

XIII.

GENESIS, XIII.

1 Abram and Lot return out of Egypt. 7 By disagreement they part asunder. 10 Lot goeth to wicked Sodom. 14 God reneweth the promise to Abram. 18 He removeth to Hebron, and there buildeth an altar.

AND Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

2 And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai ;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first ; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

5 ¶ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together : for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle : and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen ; for we *be* brethren.

9 *Is* not the whole land before thee ? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me : if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right ; or if *thou depart* to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ; and Lot journeyed east : and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched *his* tent towards Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

14 ¶ And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward :

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed *his* tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which *is* in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

COMMENTARY.

WHEN we read in Scripture the history of the true servants of GOD, we ought not to assume that every thing, which they are said to have done, was right; for there is no man on earth that doeth good, and sinneth not. The sacred writer sometimes relates the sin, without commenting on it. It was lately noticed, that Abraham, the father of the faithful, was

led into an act of duplicity, through the fear of man ; the Scripture, nevertheless, made no remark upon the subject. We now see Lot, who, in another place, is called “righteous Lot,” taking the false step of fixing his residence in Sodom. The land neighbouring to Sodom was fruitful and well watered : but Sodom was a most abandoned place ; and Lot, doubtless, suffered more in his mind, than he gained in his substance, by living among these persons ; for he “vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with their unlawful deeds *.”

Let us endeavour to describe the folly of one, who acts, in the present day, as Lot did of old ; and we will suppose him to be, like Lot, a religious person. It has often happened, that a pious man, who, like Lot, has been successful in his calling, has been, also, led, like him, by the desire of still adding to his substance, into a scene of temptations, of which, at first, he was not aware.

He has moved, with a view to the benefit of his trade, into some new place ; where there is little of the fear of GOD, and where his family are exposed to much evil ; —perhaps he joins himself to some very profane and wicked partner. What misery is he thus preparing for himself. If he be, indeed, a righteous man, his righteous soul shall be vexed, day by day, with the unlawful deeds of those among whom he has set himself down for life. What he

* 2 St. Peter, ii. 8.

has thus done on a sudden, he shall repent of at his leisure. During all his remaining days, he shall have to sustain a hard struggle with the wicked person, or persons, with whom he and his family have become connected; he shall be filled with the fruit of his own ways.

And yet, let us not be too severe on all who have thus pitched their tents among the ungodly. The case of Lot shews, that a false step may be taken by one who is, on the whole, in favour with God; though the same case suggests the miserable consequences likely to follow from it. Lot, though he went to dwell in Sodom, was in favour with God; and in proof of it, Lot was saved, when Sodom was destroyed. Let us, therefore, not condemn a character for one fault. On this principle, we might condemn Noah, on account of his having been once overtaken with drunkenness; and Abraham, on account of his prevaricating in a particular instance; as well as Lot, on account of his chusing Sodom for his dwelling place, or on account of the direct and dreadful sin which is elsewhere recorded:—not to mention the too well remembered case of David. No; let us learn from Scripture, to contemplate the general character of man, and not to limit our attention to one unfavourable point. Perhaps, indeed, what we term a grievous fault may admit of some defence, or, at least, of some palliation. How many are there, whose way of judging is so severe, as to make it manifest that, if they had

lived in the days of these holy men of God, they would have condemned them, without mercy, on account of some of those instances of misconduct, of which they were guilty.

Blessed be God for those Holy Scriptures which are our guide! There, men and facts are described as they are; and the very children of God are represented as men liable to err; though, on the whole, practising righteousness.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast been most merciful and gracious to us, both guiding our heedless steps in youth, and working out by Thy Providence many great deliverances for us; who hast been present with us by night and by day, to guard us and to keep us from evil; and who, even when Thou hast led us by a way which we have not known, hast still been shewing mercy to us; who hast often had pity on our infirmities, making our strength equal to our day, and laying upon us no greater burthen, than we were able to bear; accept our thanks, most merciful Father, for all Thy grace and goodness to us. Accept our thanks also, for Thy long forbearance with us, while we have been either living in sin, or complaining of Thy dealings to us; and teach us gratitude for those merciful dispensations under which we have often been guilty of repining;

not remembering, that it was the LORD, who sent them.

We pray Thee, also, to keep us mindful, through our remaining days on earth, of every deliverance, which Thou hast wrought out for us, of every sickness which Thou hast healed, of every temptation which Thou hast removed, of every danger from which Thou hast rescued us, and of every evil path from which Thou hast turned us, into which, through our own perverseness, we have been ready to run, to our ruin. Give us grace now, O LORD, to see Thine hand in all things : and give us hearts to dedicate unto Thee the lives which Thou hast spared, and the souls which Thy SON, JESUS CHRIST, died to redeem.

Be with us, also, through the remainder of our days ; and carry us in safety, through this land of our pilgrimage, to a sure inheritance in Thy kingdom above. May we, after all the trials and conflicts of this life are over, attain unto that rest, which remaineth for the people of GOD. Be Thou to us, O LORD, as a cloud by day, to guide and protect us ; and as a pillar of fire by night. Do Thou direct us constantly in all our ways ; and teach us to follow Thy guidance ; not turning back to any sins, from which we have escaped ; nor desiring any more the corrupt pleasures of those, who have their whole portion in this life. May we all, O LORD, walk by faith ; and attain unto the privilege of being the sons of GOD, and heirs of Thine

eternal promises. May we be led by Thine arm, directed by Thy providence, and strengthened by Thy Spirit. May we be defended by Thy favour, as with a shield, from the face of our enemies ; and walk day by day in the obedience of faith, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. And bless us, O LORD, throughout this day : be Thou present with us wheresoever we go ; and grant, that whatever we take in hand may be to Thy glory.

We present these our imperfect supplications, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our blessed and only SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XIV.

GENESIS, XV. 1—6.

1 *God encourageth Abram.* 2 *Abram complaineth for want of an heir.* 4 *God promiseth him a son, and a multiplying of his seed.* 6 *Abram is justified by faith.*

AFTER these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the

stars, if thou be able to number them : and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

COMMENTARY.

THE faith of Abraham “the father of all them that believe*,” is often celebrated in Scripture : and, as his faith was, so was his obedience also ; for it is the want of faith, which causes disobedience. Many believe not, who, nevertheless, think, that they believe. Many imagine that their faith is sufficient ; and that what they want is only some improvement in their works ; in whom, nevertheless, the foundation of a true faith has never yet been laid.

“Abraham believed GOD, and it was counted unto him for righteousness †.” Surely that faith, which is counted for righteousness, cannot be a principle of an ordinary kind. Abraham relied on the divine promise ; and he gave proof of this, when, having been commanded by GOD to offer up his only son Isaac, he obeyed ; trusting that GOD would even raise up Isaac again from the dead, rather than fail to fulfil His word.

May our faith be like that of Abraham ! May it be not the faith of one who carelessly assents to the religion of his country ! May it be that persuasion

* Rom. iv. 11.

† Rom. iv. 3.

of the heart in the truth of the divine promise ; and that resting of the soul on GOD, which shall influence our practice ; and which shall make us part with every beloved Isaac, at the command of our Heavenly Father ! Then shall GOD be to us also a shield, and our exceeding great reward.

Abraham entered into covenant with GOD : but we have a covenant established by far better promises. To Abraham, the LORD promised a seed which no man could number ; and the possession of a fair land : in which Abraham had as yet not set his foot. To us, He promises in this world all things pertaining to life and godliness ; and eternal blessedness hereafter, —if we are of the number of the true believers.

May we, then, embrace the Christian promises ! May we stedfastly trust in them ! May we daily live upon them ! May our hope be in these, and not in temporal possessions ; in these, and not in ourselves ; in these, and not in any thing which either the world, or the flesh, or the Devil can offer to us !

But this passage may, also, instruct us in a great doctrinal point ; for it is turned to this use by St. Paul. That Apostle, after showing, in his Epistle to the Romans, that all mankind are under sin ; and that, by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified in the sight of GOD ; —goes on to say, that we are “justified by faith without the deeds of the law * :” and then he proceeds to show, from the

* Rom. iii. 28.

chapter of Genesis, on which we are now commenting, that this doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine of the Old Testament. “For if Abraham,” says he, “were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before GOD. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed GOD; and it was counted unto him for righteousness*.” “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up JESUS our Lord from the dead; who was delivered, for our offences; and was raised again, for our justification†.”

Abraham believed the promise of GOD, respecting the seed which should be given him; in which seed the Messiah was included. Thus his faith had respect to a Saviour *who was to come*; ours is to be fixed on a Saviour *who hath come*: and, as Abraham’s faith was imputed to him for righteousness; as he was accepted through this trust in the promises, and not through his own works or deservings; so we, also, being “justified by faith” are to have “peace with GOD, through our Lord JESUS CHRIST:—by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD ‡.”

But lest we should think, that a dead faith can save us; and that works were not necessary to be

* Rom. iv. 2, 3.

† Rom. iv. 23, 24, 25.

‡ Rom. v. 1, 2.

performed by Abraham, and are not required from us under the Gospel, the Apostle James quotes the same passage in Genesis, in order to shew the necessity of works as a fruit and evidence of faith, though not as the meritorious cause of our salvation. For “faith,” says he, “if it hath not works, is dead, being alone *.” “Thou believest, that there is one GOD; thou doest well: The devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou, how faith wrought with his works; and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed GOD; and it was imputed unto him for righteousness †.”

Thus, then, we see, that Abraham’s faith is brought to prove both the doctrine of our justification by faith, and the doctrine of the necessity of works working with our faith; and thus making our faith perfect.

May then our faith be like that of Abraham: a faith, which, while it trusts the promises of GOD, produces acts of unequivocal obedience! May we thus walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham: and, finally, may we be gathered among the seed of Abraham, being made heirs according to the promise!

* St. James, ii. 17.

† St. James, ii. 19. 23.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who hast taught us, that without faith it is impossible to please Thee, grant us the gift and grace of faith ; and enable us — not in this day's service only, but in all our lives — to approach Thee acceptably, according to Thy will, through our only Mediator, JESUS CHRIST.

We desire to bless Thee for the external benefits of our condition. Thou hast not made the wilderness our habitation ; but hast placed us in the midst of worldly advantages ; and, above all, hast committed to us the knowledge of Thy Blessed Gospel, the means of Grace, and the hope of Glory. While in the ancient world Thou didst reveal Thyself to Thy servants in visions of the night, or by open manifestations of Thine awful Presence, Thou hast entrusted to us the Holy Book, in which Thou hast recorded Thy will, and the sure word of prophecy ; and hast promised Thy gracious Spirit to enable us to understand it.

Enlighten our minds, we beseech Thee, O GOD, so that we may obtain all needful knowledge from Thy sacred Scriptures ; and may profit — to our soul's health — by the history and the doctrines which they contain. Grant us faith unfeigned in the truths which Thou hast revealed to us ; and enable us to shew forth that faith by the works which Thou requirest. May our faith be like that

of Abraham, influencing our daily practice : and, though not called to the same form of trial with him, may we, like him, be prepared by Thy Grace to surrender every beloved object, when Thou shalt require it. Enable us to realise the unseen world around us ; and to walk by faith as seeing Him who is invisible. Yet while we feel that we are here among shadows, and that it will profit us nothing to gain the whole visible world, at the hazard of our souls, teach us also to feel, that Thou hast given to each of us a course of active duty, as well towards our fellow-men, as towards Thee : and that Thou requirest us to be faithful in the stewardship of each particular talent which Thou hast committed to us. Direct us, then, we beseech Thee, O GOD, in the course of our lives. Grant us grace to look to Thee habitually in faith, trusting Thee, as Abraham trusted ; and to do gladly all such works as Thou commandest us ;—and, having done all, to say that we are unprofitable servants ; that we have done that which it was our duty to do ; and that our only hope is in Thy free mercy through JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD.

Every blessing for time and for eternity, we ask in His name alone : and in His own holy words conclude our prayer.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c. •

XV.

GENESIS, XVIII. 1—5. 16—33.

1 *Abraham entertaineth three angels. — 17 The destruction of Sodom is revealed to Abraham. 23 Abraham maketh intercession for the men thereof.*

AND the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in Thy sight, pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant:

4 Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

16 ¶ And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do.

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgement; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.

20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

23 ¶ And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein?

25 That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt Thou destroy all the city for *lack of* five? And He said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy *it*.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And He said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake.

30 And he said *unto him*, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do *it*, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

33 And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

COMMENTARY.

How melancholy is it to reflect, that the wicked should be so many; and the righteous so few. We read, that, at the time of the flood, Noah only and his family found favour in the sight of God: and that soon after the flood, idolatry and wickedness began every where to prevail. The Jews were formed into a separate people, in order that they might be preserved from the general corruption. But they, also, corrupted their ways; and only a small remnant of them were considered as true Israelites, in the time of CHRIST. In our days, how corrupt is the mass of mankind. The name of Christian is given to many European nations; as that of Israelites was bestowed on all the children of Israel: but the majority of Christians are far

from following CHRIST ; as the majority of Israelites were far from walking in the steps of their father Israel. Rich and prosperous places are peculiarly liable to this moral corruption. Pride and fulness of bread were the occasion of the destruction of Sodom ; and they have been the ruin of many a great city. To what wickedness, indeed, may we not be carried by the full indulgence of the propensities of our sinful nature. When our riches exempt us from laborious industry, and enable us to please the body to the utmost ; and when, to the full indulgence of the flesh, is added the gratification of all the pride and vanity of the mind, what may not men perpetrate ! Cities, apparently the most prosperous and powerful, have thus been suddenly brought down. The cry of their sins goes up to heaven : and the LORD either visits them with his signal judgements ; or leaves them to feel some of the natural consequences of their crimes.

But we, also, learn from this chapter, that even a small number of righteous, found in a city, may be sufficient for its deliverance. Ten righteous might have saved Sodom, through the intercession of Abraham ; but not ten righteous were to be found. We may deduce hence, that the number of the true servants of GOD may be extremely small ; where, nevertheless, there may be no anarchy in the state, no dissolution of the bonds of civil society, no sense of any great corruption in the peo-

ple, no apprehension of impending danger, no peculiar terrors of conscience: for in Sodom, we are informed by another part of Holy Writ, they were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*,” at the time of which this chapter treats.

Another remark on this passage may be useful. Abraham, it may be observed, who had lived near Sodom, had conceived that there must have been fifty righteous in it; and, if not fifty, yet forty; if not forty, yet twenty; if not twenty, yet, at least, ten. He had been prone to think too favourably of their number; and yet there can be little doubt, that the men of Sodom would be apt to charge him with being uncharitable. So is it sometimes now. The servants of GOD are generally thought, by the ungodly, to be too strict in their judgement of others. “We trust,” say the irreligious men, “that there are more good people in the world than these very strict persons suppose.” Perhaps there may not be so many. Perhaps where the charitable Christian may be trusting, that there are fifty righteous, there may not be ten.

Some undoubtedly err on the severe side, as Abraham himself did on a subsequent occasion; but this is not the side on which the majority of mankind are in the chief danger.

Let us, from this passage, principally learn the

* St. Matt. xxiv. 38.

importance of intercessory prayer, and the benefit of a small number of righteous to the whole even of a kingdom.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast appointed a day in which Thou wilt judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom Thou hast ordained, give us grace, we beseech Thee, so to judge ourselves, while we are in this world, that we may not be everlastingly condemned. May we fear Thy wrath, as well as reverence Thy majesty; and endeavour to make our peace with Thee, before we are called hence to judgement. May we daily examine ourselves with all diligence; that we may know, whether we are of the number of those who are walking in that broad way which leadeth to destruction; or in that strait and narrow path, which all Thy saints have trod, and which shall end in everlasting life. Suffer us not, O LORD, to be carried away by the error of the wicked, so as to be partakers of their ungodliness; but enable us to come out from among them, and to be separate, not touching the unclean thing: and having purified ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, may we perfect holiness in the fear of GOD.

We pray Thee also to deliver us from deceiving

ourselves with any form of godliness, and with any false shew of goodness. May we be holy, as Thou art holy. May we become followers of Thy saints, and of Thine apostles of old; even as they followed CHRIST, differing from that corrupt world, which was around them, and continually testifying against it, that its works were evil. And teach us, we pray Thee, so to live in the world as not to be corrupted by it: and so to use it, as not to abuse it: remembering always, that the time is short; and that the fashion of this world passeth away. May we be looking forward with the eye of faith to that Day, when Thou shalt eternally separate the righteous from the wicked: when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and when the earth, with all the works thereof, shall be burnt up. May we therefore gird up the loins of our minds, and be sober, and be as servants waiting for their Lord; always occupied in our Master's work, and ready for His call.

O LORD, we lift up our prayer also for a world, which lieth in wickedness; and which, though fitted for destruction, is still hardening itself in iniquity. Have mercy, O LORD, on them, who call not on Thy name: and grant, that, where as yet they know Thee not, there may rise up a people who may praise and serve Thee. Have mercy on our native land; where, though Thy Gospel is preached, and many witnesses of its truth and excellency are seen, yet sin so much abounds. Spare us, O LORD,

notwithstanding our great national iniquities ; and raise up, in Thy Providence, men of faith and prayer, who may intercede in our behalf, and who may be a great blessing among us.

Bless the Churches of CHRIST ; and let them be edified, and multiplied ; and let peace and harmony be among them.

And bless us, we beseech Thee, as a family, that we may serve Thee in our generation, and be a household united in Thy faith and fear. Bless all our connexions and relations ; and give us grace to fulfil our several duties to them ; walking in all those holy ways, which Thou hast appointed for us.

Hear, we beseech Thee, these our imperfect prayers and supplications, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST our only ADVOCATE and REDEEMER.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XVI.

GENESIS, XIX. 1—4. 6, 7. 9—14.

1 *Lot entertaineth two angels.* 4 *The vicious Sodomites are stricken with blindness.* 12 *Lot is sent for safety into the mountains.*

AND there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing *them* rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

2 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

3 And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

4 ¶ But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed

the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter. —

6 And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

7 And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. —

9 And they said, Stand back. And they said *again*, This one *fellow* came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge : now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, *even* Lot, and came near to break the door.

10 But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

11 And they smote the men that *were* at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great : so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

12 ¶ And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides ? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place :

13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD ; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city: but he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.

COMMENTARY.

How dreadful is it to dwell in the society of the wicked! Little do those who live in sober families, or under the eye of religious parents, as yet know of the abominable wickedness which in many places abounds. How horrible was the condition of Lot! He was a righteous man; and his soul was vexed day by day with the unlawful deeds of the people around him: and yet he wanted firmness. Lot seems to have resisted the men of Sodom in some degree; but not sufficiently: and we are all in danger of erring in this respect. When men around us are uncommonly profligate, if we do but differ from them slightly, we think, that we perform a great work; not considering, that, whatever may be the danger to which we are exposed, we must absolutely refuse to consent to any sin. Wicked men will charge the righteous with forwardness and impertinence, in cases in which the righteous are guilty rather of the opposite fault. Thus, when Lot rebuked the men of Sodom, though he opposed them much too faintly, they cried out,

“ This fellow came in to sojourn with us ; and he will needs be a judge.” “ Why do you presume to sit in judgement upon us,” is the common answer of sinners to the mildest of their reprovers. We must, therefore, learn not to regard rude charges ; but, rather, even to fear lest we may not have fulfilled the whole of our duty, when some complain that we are righteous overmuch.

We read, that GOD was now about to destroy this place ; the cry of it having “ waxen great before the face of the LORD.” How merciful, however, was the message sent to Lot. The angels are commissioned to deliver not only Lot himself, but also his family ; for (as in the case of Noah, his whole house was saved with him, so) in this instance it is said, “ Hast thou here any besides ? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place :” for, “ the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.” Lot hastens to warn his sons-in-law ; and says to them, “ Up, get ye out of this place, for the LORD will destroy this city : but he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.” Here then we see not only the general evil of living in a wicked place, but also the particular mischief of consenting to intermarry with the wicked inhabitants of it.

These sons-in-law of Lot were not unlikely to be some of the more respectable inhabitants of Sodom : and Lot had, not improbably, lived with them on good terms. But now they sided with the people of

Sodom; for they had no adequate sense of the exceeding wickedness of the place,—and, therefore, no belief in the judgements of GOD denounced against it. Hence, though through their connexion with Lot, they had the advantage of a gracious warning, yet it availed them not; they perhaps had before been used to smile at the strictness of their good old father-in-law; and he now only seemed to them, as one that mocked.

Let us still more particularly apply this part of the story. Let us suppose a young person to leave a religious family, and to form a connexion with the irreligious. There seems to him at first to be nothing very seriously objectionable in the connexion; but, after a few months or years, some occasion arises, on which it becomes necessary for each to take his side; and to say whether he will be for religion or against it, there being no longer any possibility of holding a middle course: the one is determined to save himself from a wicked generation; but to the other “he seems as one that mocketh.” The breach is now complete: the one runs with the wicked world, headlong to destruction; the other separates more than ever, is blest with new opportunities of increasing in holiness; and the dreadful consequences of that inconsiderate connexion, which had taken place, at last most manifestly appear.

Let us then dread to unite ourselves with the wicked, even when they seem to be in prosperity and peace; for, if we choose our lot among them,

we know not to what lengths of wickedness we may be carried, nor into what trouble we may fall.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast in Thy great mercy delivered us from the society of the wicked, and, though we live in an ungodly world, hast yet preserved us from witnessing many of the abominations of it, we thank Thee for having thus chosen our lot for us. We thank Thee for delivering us from many of the temptations, to which they, who dwell among the more abandoned sinners, are exposed: and we pray for grace to fight manfully, under CHRIST'S banners, against the world, as well as against the flesh and the devil, if ever it should please Thee, in Thy Providence, to try our faith by subjecting us to the wrath of ungodly men.

We acknowledge, that we have not opposed sinners as we ought; that we have often yielded too much to their unreasonableness; and have too readily satisfied ourselves with some slight resistance to them. We acknowledge also, that we have often disguised much of Thy truths, through the fear of men, and have shunned to declare the whole counsel of GOD. O how little have we asserted Thy cause before an ungodly world, or shewn that we are on Thy side: and though Thou hast blessed us with light and knowledge, yet how have we hid our LORD'S talent; how seldom have we opposed

sin, and been Thy witnesses before an evil generation! We pray Thee, O LORD, to strengthen our faith; and to fill us with an awful expectation of that Day, when Thy judgements shall no longer be delayed; but when the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; and the righteous, into life eternal. May we, therefore, flee from the wrath to come: may we dread sin as the greatest evil, and set ourselves against it. May we have grace also to warn and rebuke and reprove those, with whom we are connected, lest they should come under condemnation. May we remember, that the time is short; that the Day of the LORD cometh suddenly; and that blessed are those servants only, whom their Master shall find ready.

We pray Thee, also, to deliver us from choosing our part with them who know Thee not, and who desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. May we fear, lest dwelling with them in this world, we should be carried away by the example of their great and growing ungodliness; and that we should be condemned with them in the world which is to come. May we take warning from Thy holy word; and may we so read and meditate on its solemn truths, that our souls may be profited thereby; and that we may ponder the way of our feet, and may order well our goings.

O LORD, direct us by Thy merciful Providence. Be Thou our portion, and the lot of our inheritance. Deliver us from every threatening danger;

lead us by Thine arm, out of every evil; guide us by Thy counsel; and afterwards receive us to glory.

We pray also for them who are still lying in their wickedness; and who refuse instruction, and hate every reproof. Turn them, turn them, O LORD, from their sins, before the day of grace is past: and teach them. to know that now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

Have mercy especially on our relations and friends and connexions. Save them from this evil world; and bring them into the society of those who fear and love Thy name. Call them away from being the companions of sinners, and especially from sitting in the seat of the scorers; lest, having forsaken GOD, they should be forsaken of Thee for ever. And O that we, who are of one family on earth, may all meet, and be of one family above; and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and with all the company of Thy saints, in Thy Kingdom in Heaven.

These blessings we ask in the name of JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XVII.

GENESIS, XIX. 15—30.

18 *He obtaineth leave to go into Zoar. 24 Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed. 26 Lot's wife is a pillar of salt. 30 Lot dwelleth in a cave.*

15 ¶ AND when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

17 ¶ And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that He said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

18 And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:

19 Behold now, Thy servant hath found grace in Thy sight, and Thou hast magnified Thy mercy, which Thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

20 Behold now, this city *is* near to flee unto, and it *is* a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (*is* it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

21 And He said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

22 Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

23 ¶ The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

25 And He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

26 ¶ But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

27 ¶ And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD :

28 And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

29 ¶ And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

30 ¶ And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him ; for he feared to dwell in Zoar : and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

COMMENTARY.

IT often pleased GOD in the beginning of the world to reveal Himself to men by signs or visions ; and also to visit them with miraculous judgements. He thus governed His people, by presenting to their minds the fear of temporal punishments and the hope of temporal rewards.

Faith, therefore, meant often a belief in some promise, or threatening, of GOD, which was to be

executed in this world. Thus the faith of Noah consisted in anticipating the approaching deluge; and that of Abraham, in expecting a numerous seed and the possession of the land of Canaan; the faith of Lot had respect to the approaching overthrow of Sodom; prompted by this faith, he warned his sons-in-law of their danger; but they, being unbelievers, paid no regard to his admonitions. The faith of Lot, however, was imperfect; for it is here said, that, when the time for departing out of Sodom came, Lot lingered.

We may presume, that it was the design of the Old Testament to shadow forth the eternal promises of GOD, under the veil of those which were temporal. When, for example, it was declared that their days should be “long in the land*,” that they should see good days, and eat “the good of the land†,” that they should “inherit the earth‡,” something, more than that which was literally spoken, was undoubtedly intended. The hearts of all holy and spiritual men would be led to the contemplation of spiritual blessings. Now the veil is completely taken away; for life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel. CHRIST is come, a high priest of those good things which were to come; the world is no longer like a child under age; it is not shut up unto the faith *afterwards* to be revealed; but “GOD, who, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in

* Exod. xx. 12.

† Gen. xlv. 18.

‡ Psalm xxxvii. 11.

time past unto the fathers by the prophets, *hath, in these last days*, spoken unto us by His Son*.”

By Him, heaven and hell have been laid open to us. “These shall go away,” says CHRIST, “into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal †.” There is now no necessity that GOD should destroy our cities, as He did that of Sodom ; in order to prove, that He hates sin, and will surely punish it : for He has manifested this hatred in a far stronger manner, by His denunciation of eternal judgement against the wicked. Our faith, therefore, must have respect to this judgement to come ;—a judgement not temporal, but final and eternal.

We should bear much in mind this difference between the dispensations made to the ancient and to the present world : for, if we do not consider it, we shall be in danger, on the one hand, of not firmly believing the miraculous interferences of the ALMIGHTY, of old time, in the way of judgement, — interferences, of which there are no modern examples ;—or, on the other hand, we shall be tempted, unwarrantably, to expect visible judgements in the present day ; and to construe the little accidents of life into miraculous events. The world now proceeds under the providence of GOD ; but under a providence which usually assigns to natural causes their own proper effects. Sin still produces misery ;

* Heb. i. 1, 2.

† St. Matt. xxv. 46.

for this is its natural effect; it is the will of GOD, that sinners, in general, should in some measure be punished even in this world; but He reserves His chief vengeance, for the great day of His wrath: and of this, GOD hath warned us in the New Testament; as plainly as He warned Lot, of the destruction of Sodom; or Noah, of the approaching deluge.

Let not, then, the divine judgements against the old world be forgotten:—they prove the LORD's hatred of sin. They are also signs, or types, of the great Day of His wrath. The LORD is angry with the wicked, every day; and though He may delay His stroke, He will at the last execute His vengeance. GOD had long borne with the growing iniquity of the men of Sodom; who, through pride and fulness of bread, had cast off the fear of His name, and had given themselves up to the vilest abominations: but, when their unbelief and wickedness had risen to its height, then GOD rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone out of heaven. Lot escapes; and his own family flees with him: but his wife looks back; and, taking part with Sodom in her heart, she is struck dead; and remains fixed on the spot, a pillar of salt.

Let us then dread the indignation of GOD against sin: “for our GOD is a consuming fire*.” But let our Christian faith be fixed on His eternal judgements. If we, like the sons-in-law of Lot, neglect

* Heb. xii. 29.

the means of our salvation ; if we do not avail ourselves of the warning given to us ; if we continue in the plain, among the men of this world, instead of fleeing to the mountain ; or if, pretending to flee thither, we, like Lot's wife, look back, and still love our sinful and forbidden pleasures ; there is then no true deliverance for us. If all, which hath been done for us by the gospel, be neglected ; if neither the terrors of the LORD can rouse us ; nor His mercies in CHRIST, affect us ; “ there remaineth now no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*.” Let us fear, lest we should fall after the same example of unbelief.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, Thou hast declared unto us, that the day cometh, when Thy Son JESUS CHRIST shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not GOD and obey not the gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction : and Thou hast declared also, that the same JESUS shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe ; give us grace, we beseech Thee, to lay to heart both the promises

* Heb. x. 26, 27.

and the threatenings of Thy word, and to prepare for the great Day of our LORD's appearing.

We confess, that we are prone to love this present world, and to take up our rest in it; and that, forgetting Thee, we fall away into many and hurtful sins, which drown us in perdition. We pray, therefore, that we may fear daily, lest, either through pride, and fulness of bread, or through any of those snares which surround us, we should be insensible of our danger; and become slothful, and self-indulgent, and unbelieving. And keep alive in our souls, by the power of Thy Spirit, an awful sense of the reality of eternal things; so that every day we live we may live with Thee, and may be making provision for our latter end.

We thank Thee for Thy Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in JESUS CHRIST. We thank Thee for all the warnings, promises, encouragements, and directions, of Thy word; for the good examples, which it sets before us; and for the instances of Thy judgements also on this guilty world, which it records for our warning. We thank Thee especially for that life and immortality, which are brought to light in the gospel; for the plainness of Thy promises in CHRIST JESUS; and for the sure foundation which, in that gospel, is laid, for the hope of every repenting sinner, through the atonement of the same JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

May we fix our faith on our once crucified but now exalted Saviour; and by the same true and living faith may we believe all the promises which are in Him; and which respect the life to come. Thus may we be enabled to live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth: knowing that we have here no continuing city, but seeking one to come. May we be made ready to obey Thy call; to follow all the precepts of CHRIST; and to do whatsoever Thou commandest us, walking in the obedience of faith, and anxious only to please Thee, and to adorn the doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all things.

Keep us, we beseech Thee, through this day; preserve us in all our ways, and deliver us out of all our dangers; and when our earthly course shall be run, receive us at length to those unspeakable glories, which are at Thy right hand for evermore.

We ask these blessings in the name, and for the sake, of Thine only SON, our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XVIII.

GENESIS, XX.

1 *Abraham sojourneth at Gerar, 2 denieth his wife, and loseth her. 3 Abimelech is reproveth for her in a dream. 9 He rebuketh Abraham, 14 restoreth Sarah, 16 and reproveth her. 17 He is healed by Abraham's prayer.*

AND Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, *She is my sister*: and Abimelech king of Gerar, sent, and took Sarah.

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou *art but* a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she *is* a man's wife.

4 But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, LORD, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?

5 Said he not unto me, *She is my sister*? and she, even she herself said, *He is my brother*: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

7 Now therefore restore the man *his* wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore *her* not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that *are* thine.

8 Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.

9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?

11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

12 And yet indeed *she is* my sister: she *is*

the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This *is* thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He *is* my brother.

14 And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave *them* unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

15 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land *is* before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.

16 And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand *pieces* of silver: behold, he *is* to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that *are* with thee, and with all *other*: thus she was reproved.

17 ¶ So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare *children*.

18 For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.

COMMENTARY.

ABRAHAM, on the occasion of the destruction of Sodom, had supposed the number of righteous men in it to be much greater than it was. “Peradventure,” (said he) “there be fifty righteous within the city* :” and it proved that there were not ten. On his coming to Gerar, he erred on the contrary side. “Surely,” said he, “the fear of God is not in this place.”

Some men assume that they know, almost by intuition, who is religious, and who is not ; they can tell the precise number of the pious in every spot. Such men are wiser than Abraham, the father of the faithful ; for he erred, twice, in this respect. Let us be wise and modest in judging : and let us be charitable to those who may not be altogether of our party.

Abraham’s error tended, on the occasion of his coming to Gerar, to draw him into a sin : he thought, that, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, being wicked, and his people wicked, they would not scruple to kill him, with the view of taking to themselves Sarah his wife ; if they should know, that she was his wife. He, therefore, gives out, that she was his sister.

Now it is true, that Sarah was the sister of Abra-

* Gen. xviii. 24.

ham ; that is to say, his half-sister, so that, literally speaking, no lie was told. He, however, intended—by saying, that she was his sister—to convey an idea, that she was his sister in such a sense, as not to be capable of being his wife. Was Abraham, therefore, free from sin in this matter? Certainly not, for the evil of a lie consists in the deceit of it. That man tells a lie, whatever his words may be, who conveys to the hearer an impression, which he (the speaker) intends that the hearer shall understand in a way which is contrary to fact: or, to put the observation in fewer words, that man is guilty of a lie, who speaks in order to deceive; and there are a thousand ways, in which we may contrive to utter no literal lie; and yet may have all the benefit, as well as all the sin, of having spoken a falsehood. Let us not deceive, or prevaricate. Let us not give a false colour to facts; nor try to place any thing in an unfair light; but let us aim to have, in every respect, “the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity—we have our conversation in the world*.”

Abraham, it is worthy of remark, did not profit by his deceit. He did not dare to act in a direct manner, trusting God with the consequences: but his faith failed, as it is said to have done in a former case: and he trusted for his safety to his own

* 2 Cor. i. 12.

crooked act. It is observable, that the very artifice, which he used in order to secure his life, exposed his wife to a danger which she would not have incurred, if he had been plain and simple in his conduct: and that his own life would have been in no peril from his speaking the truth; since the men of Gerar were not so void of the fear of the LORD, as he imagined. GOD, nevertheless, was pleased mercifully to interpose in favour of this erring servant; by appearing to Abimelech in a dream. Abimelech is angry with Abraham for his deceit; and Abraham the prophet, is put to shame before this stranger. The evil, however, is repaired through GOD's goodness; and Abraham, being had in honour by these foreigners, among whom he sojourns, receives numerous presents at their hands.

Let us take occasion to apply this story to the case of some persons of this day. They have set out, as we will suppose, like Abraham, in the exercise of faith; they have committed their bodies, their souls, and all their interests, to GOD; and though it be through faith that they have been enabled to begin to walk with GOD, yet their faith sometimes fails them. It fails them, when they come into the company of the wicked, or rather of those, whom they suppose to be wicked: "surely," they say, "the fear of GOD is not in this place." "I must therefore," they add, "take good care of my interest now that I am among unbelieving people. I suspect them of every thing which is

bad. I must therefore treat them in their own way. I must use a little craft with these heathens. I will indeed tell them no lie, perhaps ; but I must stretch a point in the present case. I must contrive a little to mislead them. I will save my own conscience by some words, which I will understand in one way ; and they, in another." Now this is to be wanting in faith : it is to walk in unbelief ; and though our end should be good, yet if our means are bad, the good end will not justify the bad means. Abraham's end was good. It was very fair and right that he should try to save his own life ; but it was not proper, that he should resort to crooked means for this purpose. We do not scruple to say, that though our end should be the promotion of the Gospel, yet if we take crooked means of promoting it, we do but hinder the cause which we mean to serve ; we disgrace it, in the eyes of unbelievers. Abraham himself might have pleaded, that the cause of the Gospel moved him to use deceit ; because the Messiah, who was not yet born, was to spring from him ; and if Abraham were to be killed, how, he might be tempted to say, will the promise be fulfilled ? Afterwards, however, he grew stronger in faith ; for, at God's command, he offered up even his son Isaac, accounting that God would sooner bring him again to life by a miracle, than fail of His promise.

Let us then fear to expose ourselves to the just censure even of those whom we deem unbelievers.

How might the men of Gerar, and Abimelech their King, have exposed, if they had thought fit, the deceitfulness of the Prophet; and have taken occasion to revile both him and his religion; and how justly may the men of the world expose and revile those professing a stricter religion, if they see them descending to their own dishonest arts, in order to further their cause. Let it, however, be here particularly noticed, that the men of Gerar did not revile Abraham; but, on the contrary, respected him, notwithstanding his lamentable infirmity: and this perhaps is one of the proofs of their having had more of the fear of God, than Abraham had the charitableness to suppose. He stood indebted for favour and protection to the very people, whom he had condemned.

Let us learn then, on the one hand, from the evil example of Abraham, to fear all uncharitableness; and let us learn, also on the other, from the good example of Abimelech, not to condemn the servants of God for an occasional failure. Let us throw a veil of charity over their faults; and if some good men are, like Abraham, uncharitable towards us, and too ready to term us unbelievers, let us prove, like Abimelech,—by shewing kindness to the men who have been suspicious of us,—that we are not so void of the fear of God, as we may have been supposed to be.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, we thank Thee for Thy holy word, and for all the doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, which it conveys to us; whereby the man of GOD may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. We thank Thee for those bright examples, which it sets before us, of men living in an ungodly world, who, by the power of Thy grace working in them, were enabled to triumph over it; who left all to follow Thee; and who both lived and died in faith, having embraced Thy promises, and confessing that they were strangers on the earth. We bless Thee, for the encouragement which we receive in viewing the excellency of their faith; and for the warning, which Thou also givest us, through their infirmities and their falls. O LORD, grant us wisdom to discern the good, and to avoid the evil, which was in them; and, at the same time, to confess ourselves to be weak and ignorant, as they were; that we may take the more earnest heed to our ways, and may call on Thee for grace to help us in all our difficulties, and to bring us out of every danger, to which, either through our ignorance, or through our fancied knowledge, we may be exposed. Pardon, O LORD, all our sins in times past: and if any of us have indeed obeyed Thy call, renouncing this sinful world, and setting

our faces heavenwards, O grant that we may pursue our course, refusing to turn aside from that holy commandment which is given unto us.

Deliver us, O LORD, from all deceit and guile. May we have the testimony of our consciences, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of GOD, we have our conversation in the world. Grant, that we may not follow the devices of our own hearts, nor lean to our own understandings, nor think to serve Thy cause, or to obtain any true benefit to ourselves, by walking in craftiness, or by doing any thing to deceive.

Teach us also fervent charity towards all men; even that charity, which both beareth all things, and endureth all things, as well as hopeth all things, and believeth all things. Deliver us from a disposition to be thinking evil, one of another, and to be judging one another. May we remember, that there is one Lawgiver and Judge, who shall be our Judge also, and who is able both to save and to destroy. And teach us to love all those, as brethren, however separated or distinguished in nation or in name, who have Thy fear dwelling in their hearts, and are thus led to avoid sinning against Thee. May we be willing to unite with them in Christian bonds; and to help them forward as brethren, knowing, that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and that a good understanding have all they, who keep Thy commandments.

Deliver us from all our prejudices, and from all the temptations to sin, to which those prejudices may lead us; and keep us ever watchful, and fearful, lest, following our own hasty judgement, we plunge ourselves into sin, before we are aware; and even give occasion to Thine enemies to blaspheme.

And have mercy, O LORD, on all who do us good, or who may have refrained, when at any time provoked by us, from doing us evil. Teach us to feel towards them a Christian spirit; and to repent of every hard word, which we may have spoken, and of every unkind thought, which we may have harboured, against them. Pardon, O LORD, these and all our other infirmities, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST.

We would take encouragement from Thy word, to hope that Thou dost not cast us off on account of our daily and hourly sins, if we are indeed humbled under them, and are striving heartily against them; for if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the Righteous, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

For His sake, O LORD, hear these our prayers; for His sake, pour out Thy Spirit upon us, as a Spirit of peace, of charity, of harmony, and of Christian love; and accept both our persons, and our imperfect services, for the sake of the same merciful Saviour and Intercessor, JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XIX.

GENESIS, XXI. 1—5. & XXII. 1—19.

XXI. 1 *Isaac is born.* 4 *He is circumcised.* — XXII. 1 *Abraham is tempted to offer Isaac.* 3 *He giveth proof of his faith and obedience.* 11 *The angel stayeth him.* 13 *Isaac is exchanged with a ram.* 14 *The place is called Jehovah-jireh.* 15 *Abraham is blessed again.*

AND the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as He had spoken.

2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

5 And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

XXII. 1 AND it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and

said unto him, Abraham : and he said, Behold, *here I am.*

2 And He said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah ; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 ¶ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass ; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son ; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife ; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father : and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold

the fire and the wood : but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering ?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering : so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of ; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham : and he said, Here *am* I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him : for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns : and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that

place Jehovah-jireh : as it is said *to this day*,
In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

15 ¶ And the angel of the LORD called
unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn,
saith the LORD, for because thou hast done
this thing, and hast not withheld thy son,
thine only *son* :

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and
in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the
stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is*
upon the sea shore ; and thy seed shall possess
the gate of his enemies ;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of
the earth be blessed ; because thou hast
obeyed my voice.

19 So Abraham returned unto his young
men, and they rose up and went together to
Beer-sheba ; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-
sheba.

COMMENTARY.

IN the former of these chapters, we read of God's fulfilling His promise to Abraham, by sending to him the long expected son, which event is said to have happened at the set time, of which God had

spoken. And in the latter chapter, we are informed of God's tempting or trying Abraham, by commanding him to sacrifice this very son, as a burnt offering, on one of the mountains, of which He told him.

Some persons have wondered, that God should command a father to put his own son to death; in doing which he was required to break, as they think, one of the plainest and most indispensable of the moral duties; but such objectors do not sufficiently consider, that duties become duties through the divine authority; and that He, who makes the law, has a right, if he sees fit, to repeal it, or to suspend it, for any special purpose, or in any particular instance. Much of the difference, between the believer and the moral man, consists in the opposition of their judgements on the very point before us. The believer has an eye to God in all his duties. He obeys his father, he loves his wife, he shews tenderness to his child, because God commands him to do this, and not merely, because there is something proper, or agreeable to his natural feelings, in doing it. He even contradicts his feelings, if his Heavenly Father commands him to contradict them; and he wishes to indulge them, only so far as he is allowed to indulge them: for he knows, that his highest affections ought to be towards his Father which is in Heaven. When therefore the question arises, whether he shall

please GOD, or the dearest relative on earth, he will please GOD, and displease his relative.

“But why,” it may be said, “should GOD choose a *son* for the person whom Abraham was to sacrifice? Why put the Patriarch upon so unnatural an act?” The answer is, that Abraham was directed to do this act, because it was so difficult to nature. GOD chose the very deed—the most contrary to the feelings of Abraham—for the trial of his faith, and as the means of rendering his faith the more manifest. If Abraham were willing to sacrifice his son, what would he not have sacrificed? The trial was calculated to show the strength of the faith of this Patriarch.

Worldly men stumble at this story, because they know not the value of faith. To please GOD is with them a small matter; to discharge, as they term it, their duty to their fellow-creature is the all in all. This story may therefore serve to prove, how unscriptural is their mode of thinking; for it shews, that, on the principles of the Scriptures, moral duties are as nothing, in comparison of the duty of pleasing GOD, and of doing, without murmur or doubt, what He clearly commands.

Abraham, as we observed, was the pattern of believers. “By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he, that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be

called*.” There was a peculiar aggravation in this trial. Isaac, whom Abraham was willing to offer up, was the very person, from whom CHRIST, the promised seed, was to come. What a temptation to disobedience and unbelief! GOD appeared inconsistent with Himself in ordering this sacrifice. He seemed to take away the only means of fulfilling His own promise; for, if Isaac were killed, how was CHRIST to descend from him? How was it, that in *Isaac*, the seed of Abraham should be blessed? Yet Abraham’s faith was so strong, that it triumphed over this difficulty; for he accounted “that GOD was able to raise him up, even from the dead†.” He knew, that nothing was impossible with GOD; and that GOD was to be obeyed, whatever might be the seeming consequences.

How affecting is the description afforded us of this scene! “And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father, and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, GOD will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.” As Abraham, at the first, set out from his country and his

* Heb. xi. 17, 18.

† Heb. xi. 19.

father's house, not knowing whither he went; trusting in God, who had so plainly called him to this adventurous expedition; so now, the same Abraham, by the power of the same faith, (though even his faith occasionally failed) performs one of the most signal and painful acts of obedience to GOD, which is recorded in the whole history of our race. Thus did he become the pattern of believers, and the father of all the faithful; and hence, is his name as such had in remembrance to this day.

Let us shortly apply this story. We have seen, that to obey GOD, in spite of all temptations to the contrary, is the lesson taught by it; and that faith in GOD is the great principle, which is wanted in order to secure, that we shall obey. Do we then believe in GOD? Do we hear His voice, and His only? Do we refuse to listen to flesh and blood, when GOD commands us to deny them? We are not required to oppose our natural feelings, at all times, and in all cases. Abraham was called to do it to this extent, only at this particular time, and in this special instance. Sometimes, a more than ordinary denial of our feelings may be required. Are we prepared for such trials? Is the authority of GOD more to us than natural affection; or is natural affection our rule, independently of GOD? We must be partakers of some portion of the faith of Abraham, if we would be heirs according to the same promise.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast taught us, that, without faith, it is impossible to please Thee; and that every one, who cometh to Thee, must believe, that Thou art the rewarder of them who diligently seek Thee, vouchsafe unto us, we beseech Thee, the abundance of this Heavenly gift, that we may both worship Thee in an acceptable manner, and may also, through the power of the same faith, trust and serve Thee, and be enabled to fulfil all Thy commandments.

Thou knowest, O LORD, the weakness of our nature, and the sin which dwelleth in us. Earthly things carry away our thoughts, and draw our affections after them; so that, in the midst of the blessings which Thou givest us, we are prone to forget Thee our GOD, and to seek our happiness from our own uncertain enjoyments. O GOD, we pray Thee so to reveal to us Thine excellency, and so to possess our hearts with a belief in Thy majesty, Thy goodness, and Thy power, that we may love Thee above all things; and may be made willing to surrender up our all unto Thee, knowing and trusting that we shall find Thee able still to provide for us, when every earthly comfort shall be taken away.

Prepare us, we beseech Thee, for the loss of those things which we now enjoy. When Thy

Providence deprives us of any blessing, grant us grace, that we may not repine ; but may be enabled to say, “The LORD gave ; and the LORD hath taken away : blessed be the name of the LORD.”

May we trust Thee in all circumstances, and place our whole confidence in Thee. O let us not rely on any child of man ; but may the GOD of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob be our refuge, that GOD who promised to bless them, because they obeyed His will ; and who, in that promise, never failed. Help us, O LORD, to walk in the same obedience of faith, rendering up unto Thee all we have ; and ever hearkening in the same manner to Thy voice.

Deliver us from an empty and delusive faith, from that faith, which is without works ; and which is dead, being alone. May we, like Abraham, prove the sincerity of our faith, by being willing to make every sacrifice, and to fulfil every duty, to which Thou callest us ; however painful to our nature, and unwelcome to flesh and blood.

And help us also, we beseech Thee, to maintain the profession of our faith, stedfast unto the end. O may we walk with Thee, through life ; remembering that He is faithful who hath called us. And grant that we may never cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward : but let us remember, that, in due time, we shall reap, if we faint not.

O LORD, we would wait upon Thee, this day, at

the throne of Thy grace; pleading the name of JESUS CHRIST Thy Son, and imploring this faith which is of the operation of GOD. May the LORD Himself strengthen our hearts, and fill us with His Holy Spirit; that we may thus have power to resist the temptations which surround us; and to overcome the world. And thus living in the hope of things, which are as yet unseen, may our affections be fixed on things above. May our earthly trials thus be lightened, and our heavenly consolations be increased; and may we become strong in the LORD, and in the power of His might, and put on the whole armour of GOD; adding to our faith virtue, knowledge, brotherly kindness, and charity, and every Christian grace. O may these things be in us, and abound; so that we may not be barren and unfruitful in the work of the LORD; but may we go on, from day to day, advancing both in confidence in Thee, and in the exercise of all godliness.

Pardon, we beseech Thee, the imperfection of these our prayers; and bestow upon us all things, needful for us, which we ask of Thine unspeakable mercy, in JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XX.

GENESIS, XXIV.

1 *Abraham sweareth his servant.* 10 *The servant's journey.*
 12 *His prayer.* 14 *His sign.* 15 *Rebekah meeteth him,*
 18 *fulfilleth his sign,* 22 *receiveth jewels,* 23 *sheweth her*
kindred, 25 *and inviteth him home.* 26 *The servant blesseth*
God. 29 *Laban entertaineth him.* 34 *The servant sheweth*
his message. 50 *Laban and Bethuel approve it.* 58 *Rebekah*
consenteth to go. 62 *Isaac meeteth her.*

AND Abraham was old, *and* well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.

4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.

7 ¶ The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

10 ¶ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

11 And he made his camels to kneel down

without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water*.

12 And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

13 Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that* thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

16 And the damsel *was* very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

20 And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels.

21 And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold;

23 And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room *in* thy father's house for us to lodge in?

24 And she said unto him, I *am* the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.

25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

27 And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I *being* in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

28 And the damsel ran, and told *them of* her mother's house these things.

29 ¶ And Rebekah had a brother, and his name *was* Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

30 And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

32 ¶ And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw

and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that *were* with him.

33 And there was set *meat* before him to eat : but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

34 And he said, I *am* Abraham's servant.

35 And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great : and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old : and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell :

38 But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

40 And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with thee, and prosper thy way ; and thou shalt

take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house :

41 Then shalt thou be clear from *this* my oath, when thou comest to my kindred ; and if they give not thee *one*, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now Thou do prosper my way which I go :

43 Behold, I stand by the well of water ; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw *water*, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink ;

44 And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels : *let* the same *be* the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son.

45 And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder ; and she went down unto the well, and drew *water* : and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her *shoulder*, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also : so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter *art* thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

48 And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

51 Behold, Rebekah *is* before thee, take *her*, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth.

53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and

gave *them* to Rebekah : he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that *were* with him, and tarried all night ; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us *a few* days, at the least ten ; after that she shall go.

56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way ; send me away, that I may go to my master.

57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man ? And she said, I will go.

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister, be thou *the mother* of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

61 ¶ And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed

the man : and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi ; for he dwelt in the south country.

63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide : and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming.

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

65 For she *had* said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us ? And the servant *had* said, *It is* my master : therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.

66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife ; and he loved her : and Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here a pleasing account of the simplicity of ancient times. The servants of those days, especially if they had lived long with their masters,

were treated with much familiarity, and were employed in the most confidential business. The eldest of them became, after many years' service, a steward, rather than a servant : and it sometimes happened, that, if the master died without children, he became heir of all the possessions. It is not therefore extraordinary, that Abraham should commission his oldest servant to go to a distant country, in order to bring a wife to his son Isaac. This domestic had doubtless shewn himself worthy of his master's confidence ; for confidence is the reward of long service. How comparatively weak must be the reliance on those servants who frequently change their places ; they can have no established character.

The simplicity of ancient times appears also in the conduct of Rebekah. She was no mean person ; and yet we find her coming out of the city of Nahor, with her pitcher upon her shoulder, in her way to the well to fill it. Her civility appears both in her readiness to draw water for the servant when he asked it, and in her immediately adding, " I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hastened and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels." Such was the condescending hospitality of this daughter-in-law of Abraham the father of the faithful, and the destined wife of Isaac. How different was her character from that of not a few modern

females! Of these how many are there who, though professing Christianity, and calling themselves the daughters of Abraham, are so studious of their dress, so artificial in their manners, so idle in their habits, and so disobliging in their conduct, that they would consider themselves as troubled or degraded by the smallest condescension. The simplicity of ancient times cannot indeed be entirely imitated by us; and yet it is a good sign when it is so far followed, that vanity and pride are laid aside; and that nothing but a regard to usefulness and propriety restrains us from turning our hand to any thing. It was a good sign to see Rebekah thus busy at the well, with the other young women of Nahor. Her obliging disposition was probably some recommendation of her. Young persons should be useful, and should condescend to show civility before they are asked to do it; like Rebekah, who ran to fetch water even for the camels; and indeed, if they, who are in the early season of life, are idle and disobliging, how much more so may they be expected to prove when married; for a slothful and disobliging youth commonly issues in a still more slothful and disobliging old age.

The dress of Rebekah is not particularly noticed in this place; but we have, in the New Testament, precepts on this subject, which shew that it was not held by the apostles to be an unimportant point. "Whose adorning," (saith the apostle)

“let it not be that outward adorning — of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, — but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of GOD of great price. For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in GOD, adorned themselves; being in subjection unto their own husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, Lord; whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”*

Rebekah’s forwardness to go with the servant of Abraham, is to be referred to the manners of those times: while her own personal modesty may be partly presumed from the slight circumstance of her drawing a veil over her face as she drew near to Isaac.

In this story some things occur which are to be imitated, and some which are not.

In the prayer which Abraham’s servant offered up, that GOD would direct him in fixing on the person whom he should bring back to Isaac, we may safely imitate him, as often as we take any important thing in hand. They, who do not pray to GOD in such cases for direction, are not sons and daughters of Abraham; but are to be classed rather with the heathen: nor must they expect to

* 1 St. Peter, iii. 3—6.

be blessed, either in marriage, or in their other concerns.

The particular prayer of Abraham's servant is however no pattern for our imitation. He was sent on a difficult and unwilling errand ; and he seems to have had a special promise of direction. GOD was often used in that age to shew favour to His servants in a miraculous manner ; and they might on this account the more properly supplicate His extraordinary interference ; or He may be supposed to have heard the prayers of His ancient servant, forgiving any little infirmity which might attend them. We should imitate their piety ; and rejoice in the superior light and knowledge of our dispensation.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who art the GOD of Providence as well as of Grace, who hast the hearts of all men in Thy hand, and who turnest all events as seemeth best to Thy Godly wisdom, hear our prayers, we beseech Thee ; and be Thou pleased so to order all the events of our lives, that in the end we may rejoice at Thy merciful dispensations towards us.

Deliver us, O LORD, from walking after the way of our own heart, and the sight of our own eyes ; lest, being left to eat of the fruit of our own ways, we should at length lie down in sor-

row, and have our portion with the wicked. May we set GOD always before us. May we trace Thine hand in all things: may we daily seek wisdom from Thee, imploring Thee to guard and to keep us; especially to direct us in all important steps in life, and to lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

Our prayer, O LORD, is offered up to Thee, this day, for a blessing on all that concerns us. We pray Thee to bless us in our several relations and connexions in life, in the several employments to which Thou callest us, in our endeavours to do good to the world around us, and in all our various labours for ourselves, or for the benefit of those who are near and dear unto us. May the blessing of Heaven be on every member of this family, and on all connected with us: and do Thou, O LORD, conduct both us and ours, through all the various changes of this mortal life, to a sure inheritance in Thine eternal kingdom.

We pray, also, that, as one generation dies away, another may rise up to serve Thee: and that there may not be wanting, in this our day, a holy seed, who shall declare Thy truth to their children, and to their children's children: that they also may set their hope in GOD, and not forget the works of GOD, but keep His commandments.

We thank Thee for all Thy mercies, which

were of old; and which Thou didst pour down on Thy true and faithful servants. We pray, that, profiting by their example, we may put on the same graces, adorning ourselves with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

Give us grace to labour diligently in our several callings; being ready for every good word and work; not minding high things, but condescending to the most humble office, and to men of low estate. O may we indeed be followers of Him, who made Himself of no reputation; and who even washed the feet of His disciples, hereby leaving us an example that we should tread in His steps. And, whereas amongst the men of this world, they, that are chief, desire to exercise lordship over others; may it be remembered, among us, that he, who is greatest, must be even as the least; and he, who governeth, even as he who serveth. May we, by love, therefore, both serve and edify one another; shewing thus that we are the true followers of CHRIST, and believers in Him. And pardon, O LORD, our pride and vanity, our high thoughts of ourselves, our selfishness, and ingratitude, and want of love both to Thee, and to one another. May we learn to love as brethren, to be pitiful, and to be courteous; and to unite as one body in CHRIST, experiencing daily, that, in thus keeping Thy commandments, there is great reward.

Hear us, most merciful God, in these our

prayers ; and pour down, in answer to them, Thy blessed Spirit among us. We ask it in the name, and for the sake, of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXI.

GENESIS, XXXVII.

2 *Joseph is hated of his brethren. 5 His two dreams. 13 Jacob sendeth him to visit his brethren. 18 His brethren conspire his death. 21 Reuben saveth him. 26 They sell him to the Ishmeelites. 31 His father, deceived by the bloody coat, mourneth for him. 36 He is sold to Potiphar in Egypt.*

AND Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2 These *are* the generations of Jacob. Joseph, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 ¶ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told *it* his brethren : and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed :

7 For, behold, we *were* binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright ; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us ? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us ? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 ¶ And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more ; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told *it* to his father, and to his brethren : and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed ? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth ?

11 And his brethren envied him ; but his father observed the saying.

12 ¶ And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed *the flock* in Shechem ? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here *am I*.

14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks ; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 ¶ And a certain man found him, and, behold, *he was* wandering in the field : and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou ?

16 And he said, I seek my brethren : tell me, I pray thee, where they feed *their flocks*.

17 And the man said, They are departed hence ; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him : and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

21 And Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands ; and said, Let us not kill him.

22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit that *is* in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him ; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

23 ¶ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, *his* coat of *many* colours that *was* on him ;

24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit : and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat bread : and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt.

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh. And his brethren were content.

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 ¶ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child *is* not; and I, whither shall I go?

31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

32 And they sent the coat of *many* colours, and they brought *it* to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it *be* thy son's coat or no.

33 And he knew it, and said, *It is* my

son's coat ; an evil beast hath devoured him ; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him ; but he refused to be comforted ; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

COMMENTARY.

ABRAHAM, the father of the faithful, begat Isaac ; and Isaac, who married Rebekah, begat both Esau and Jacob, from whom sprang two nations. Jacob was the younger brother ; yet the blessing was promised to the children of Jacob, in preference to those of the elder brother Esau ; [who is said to have profanely sold his birth-right to Jacob for some bread and pottage,] for it was ordained that, as the New Testament expresses it, “ the elder shall serve the younger*.”

* Rom. ix. 12.

We have in the chapter now before us an account of the twelve children of Jacob, and of the envy which arose among them against their younger brother Joseph. This envy, though sinful in them, was overruled by Providence for good. Of the good thus brought about by God through the sin of these men, we shall speak in a latter part of this history. We shall here dwell on the nature of envy, and the great sinfulness of it. It was this passion, which led the chief priests and Pharisees, in the time of CHRIST, to commit the crime of crucifying Him; since, as Pilate said, “for *envy*, they had delivered Him*.” The mischievous nature of envy shews itself in a striking manner in the history of Joseph. It grew up in his brethren from small beginnings, and issued in an act little short of that of putting him to death.

Few persons sufficiently examine, whether they are harbouring this sin in their breasts. Every degree of it is acknowledged to be odious; and on this account we are most unwilling to suppose ourselves infected by it. Joseph’s brethren seem to have allowed this passion to work secretly within them; till it broke out in the dreadful deed, of which we have been reading. They hated Joseph, and thought they had good reason to hate him; they saw him at the same time beloved by his father; and they envied him the advantages over themselves,

* St. Matt. xxvii. 18.

which they considered him as having undeservedly obtained: and all their own faults were overlooked in their eagerness to blame the supposed faults of Joseph. So is it with us. We see some person in whom we think that there is a manifest fault. We observe him to be nevertheless preferred to us. We behold a brother, a sister, or an acquaintance, whom we judge to be no better than ourselves, far more caressed than we are. We are now more and more quick to see his faults: and he seems, (as Joseph seemed to his brethren) to carry himself too loftily towards us. O what hatred and envy are to be found among men! Is any one in power,—how many shafts of malice are directed against him:—how many tongues begin to talk him down! No character, which is lifted up, escapes this persecution; one would think, that every man, who obtains the favour of his Prince, was preferred for his very wickedness. It is envy which causes so much censure of men in power. The world conspires, like the eleven brethren of Joseph, to speak evil of those whom they see preferred before them.

Let us look each of us to our own hearts. Are there no secret risings of envy there? Can we bear to be overlooked? When we hear a successful rival praised in our presence, can we unaffectedly join in the praise? Are we sufficiently ready to believe, that there are praiseworthy qualities in the rivals of our fame? Are we charitable towards such persons? Do we love them? If

we feel no actual love towards them, we ought to suspect ourselves of hatred and of envy also. "Charity" not only "envieth not" but "is kind*." We ought to examine whether we feel this evil spirit towards persons of a different sect from us. The Jews were remarkable for envy. They, as a nation, hated all other nations; and the men of each sect hated all sects except their own. Do we dislike men because they differ in religion, or in politics, or in general sentiments? Do we watch against envy? If we do not watch against it, we are probably under the power of it. We may chance to have never yet been tempted by our envy to any flagrant and open acts of wickedness: but, if the absence of such temptation have alone preserved us, let us not imagine that our hearts are untainted by this sin.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast given us Thy word, to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths; and who shewest, in that word, the evil of sin, and, the various workings of human iniquity, give us grace to profit by what we read; and to look daily into our own hearts, that we may perceive every root of bitterness which is to be found there; and may carefully search it out.

We confess, that we are by nature proud, and

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

selfish, and jealous of our own character and credit: and that, instead of fulfilling Thy precepts, and in honour preferring one another, we are prone to prefer ourselves, and to take offence at every preference shewn to our neighbour.

But we pray Thee to change our hearts, by Thy renewing grace; putting into us that spirit, which was in CHRIST; who made Himself of no reputation; and who pleased not Himself; and was meek and lowly in heart. May we be grounded in the knowledge of our own great unworthiness; and thus may we be habitually humbled, both in Thy sight, and in the sight of all men. O let us not be lifted up by pride, and fall into the snare of the Devil. Let neither our earthly privileges, nor any fancied spiritual advantages, which we have over others, teach us to despise them, or to wish them ill; lest we fall under Thy rebuke, and become ourselves subject to Thy chastisement. We pray for peaceable, humble, and quiet minds, and for contentment in any state of life, which Thou mayest be pleased to allot to us. We pray that we may not only cease to do evil; but that we may learn to do well: that we may not only put away all bitterness, and wrath, and envy, and malice, and evil speaking; but that we may be also kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD, for CHRIST's sake, hath forgiven us.

And pardon, O LORD, we beseech Thee, all our sins and evil tempers, in times past : and be pleased, of Thy great mercy, not to visit us in judgement for our offences ; but, of Thy grace and goodness, do Thou, in Thine own time, out of our evil, bring forth good. Humble us under the sense of our manifold faults ; yet teach us to see, how Thou, in mercy, hast led us by Thy Providence ; and hast overruled many wrong things, which we have done, so as to take away the bitter consequences, which might justly have been expected to be brought down upon us.

Accept, O LORD, our thanks for these and all Thy mercies.

Suffer us not to return to sin and folly any more ; lest a worse thing come upon us ; but make us henceforth to be faithful, and believing, humble, and heavenly-minded, merciful, and charitable one towards another ; anxious to repair every evil, which we may have done ; and watchful in all things, and circumspect, jealous over our own hearts, and holy in all our conduct ; that so we may know, that we are of the number of Thy servants ; and, finally, through Thy mercy and grace in CHRIST, may be permitted to enter into the joy of Thy kingdom.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXII.

GENESIS, XXXIX.

1 *Joseph advanced in Potiphar's house. 7 He resisteth his mistress's temptation. 13 He is falsely accused. 20 He is cast in prison. 21 God is with him there.*

AND Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed

the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake ; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand ; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was *a goodly person*, and well favoured.

7 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph ; and she said, Lie with me.

8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand ;

9 *There is* none greater in this house than I ; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife : how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business ; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within.

12 And she caught him by his garment,

saying, Lie with me : and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

14 That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us ; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice :

15 And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me :

18 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me ; that his wrath was kindled.

20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison.

21 ¶ But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.

23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and *that* which he did, the LORD made *it* to prosper.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here the description of a righteous man under worldly adversity. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all*." We may learn from this story, to expect sometimes to suffer for doing well; possibly to suffer, even in our reputation for morality and religion, in consequence of being really moral and religious. Morality and religion com-

* Psalm xxxiv. 19.

monly are united. All religious men are moral ; though there may be some moral men who are not religious. Very few of these however would continue moral, if placed in the circumstances of Joseph. Nothing less than the fear of GOD in the heart is sufficient to ensure a moral conduct in such a case as this. Reputation is commonly the foundation of that morality which is independent of religion ; but regard to reputation could only contribute in this instance to increase the temptation to sin. Had Joseph yielded to the wishes of the wife of Potiphar, he would have preserved his character ; he would have continued to be thought by Potiphar to be a good man ; and he would not have been cast into prison. Faithfulness to his duty brought him under the suspicion of being unfaithful. How false then is that sentiment, which some persons have spread, that "virtue is its own reward." Virtue is not its own reward *in all cases*. It is often quite the contrary. Sometimes vice and wickedness promise safety and happiness ; and to do our duty appears to be the way to ruin. Joseph, for doing his duty, was cast into prison.

Let us bless GOD, if we are not tried thus severely : but let us also examine ourselves. What are we in secret ? What are we, when no eye sees us ? And especially what are we, when we are brought into straits, and when we cannot escape suffering except by sinning ? What are we, when reputation, and love of ease, and inclination plead

on the side of sin ; and when we have nothing, but the fear of GOD, to set against it? “ How can I do this great wickedness,” said Joseph, “ and sin against GOD *?” Here then is an example for us. Words are suggested to us by which we may answer every temptation. And this is true religion. Joseph was a truly religious man, as this part of his story shews. We often dispute about religion, and raise difficult questions upon it. Give me, however, that religion which enables a man to conquer sin, when every thing unites in tempting to it : and all the religion which consists in mere words and forms, or in mere superiority of light and knowledge, shall pass for nothing in the comparison. Secret self-denial, secret preference of GOD to all the world, secret renunciation of the sinful pleasures of this world, and a heart firm to GOD and duty :—this is the great test. These are evidences for Heaven, which are harder to be obtained, and more safely to be trusted to, than any fancied visions or fancied revelations from the LORD ; for men may deceive themselves as to these extraordinary impressions ; but the conquest over a tempting or easily besetting sin does not so easily admit of self-delusion.

If ever you hope to stand undismayed before the Judgement seat of CHRIST, try yourselves then by this test. How do you withstand your most secret temptations? What change has religion operated

* Gen. xxxix. 9.

in this respect? Can you appeal to the heart-searching GOD, that it has done much for you in this particular? That it has taught you to resist sinful thoughts as you never did before? that it has taught you to hate them? to escape from them, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD*?" "To him that overcometh," says CHRIST, "will I grant to sit with Me in My throne †." What trials shall you be able to shew that you have overcome, when the great Day of Judgement shall arrive? You will have no crown of life, if there has been no victory. We naturally shun self-denying religion; and it is therefore the more necessary to urge it. Any doctrine is welcome—any subject is palatable in comparison of this. The necessity of overcoming our inclinations is often one of the last points, which we are brought to admit: and yet the sincerity of our faith must often be tried by this test.

We are not informed by the Scripture, what was the time of Joseph's first becoming religious. We know but little of the manner of his conversion; but we read that he conquered hard temptations; and was upright in very trying circumstances; and we are clearly told, that the fear of GOD produced in him the spirit of obedience. We also read, that he forgave his brethren freely, and liberally, for all their injuries. Doubtless he knew that he him-

* Gen. xxxix. 9.

† Rev. iii. 21.

self had much also to be forgiven. May our religion be like his; and when we come to die, may we have abundant testimony of this unequivocal kind, that we are true children of Abraham.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who triest the hearts and reins of all the children of men, and who hast appointed a day, in which Thou wilt eternally separate between him, who serveth Thee, and him, who serveth Thee not; give us grace so to examine ourselves, and so to live, according to Thy will, that we may be found at Thy right hand, in the Day of Judgement. O deliver us from all error, and ignorance, and deceit. Draw away our minds, we beseech Thee, from every false hope, whereby we may be in danger of being deluded; and give us honest hearts; hearts which are afraid of sin, counting it the greatest evil; and enable us to watch, with stedfastness and perseverance, against every temptation to it.

O let not our religion stand in a mere belief of doctrines, or in a form of words: but let it be sincere in Thy sight; so that, in the great Day, we may not be confounded, when Thou shalt say to many, who shall boast of having spoken and prophesied in Thy name, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity."

And if Thou hast seen fit, O LORD, not as yet

to try us with any sore temptation, O do Thou prepare us for the trial. May the fear of GOD be planted in all our hearts ; and may it be strengthened in us continually ; that, when sudden temptation comes upon us, we may be ready to say, —“How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD ?”

May we carry about with us a constant sense of Thy presence. In our lying down, and in our rising up ; when in company, and when alone ; when engaged in work, as well as in worship and in prayer ; be Thou, O LORD, ever with us, to guard us from evil, to put holy thoughts within us, and a lively fear of trespassing against Thee.

Preserve in us a tender conscience ; make us fearful of the first approaches of sin : make us to dread a sinful imagination ; and to contend habitually against it. Grant, that we may never be carried away by vain disputings, or doctrines which are not for edifying : but may be engaged in watching against evil ; and in applying each truth, which we have learnt, to the conquest of our corruptions.

O LORD, forgive us, that we have so little contended against sin, in times past ; and that a deceived heart hath so often turned us aside. May we now stand in awe, and sin not ; and commune with our own hearts, and in our chambers, and be still. May we repent of all our false repentance ; and draw near to Thee, in faith :

being humble, holy, heavenly-minded, stedfastly determined and set against every evil. And while we thus feel more and more the extreme corruption of our nature, which is so contrary to Thy spirit of holiness, may we feel our love to CHRIST, our Redeemer, increasing, and strengthening, daily : and may we be constrained by this love, to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who hath died for us.

O LORD, hear and answer these our imperfect prayers : direct us all in the right way : and suffer us not to stumble, or to fall. Grant, that, having run, not as uncertainly,—having fought, not as one that beateth the air ; but having kept under the body, and brought it into subjection, and having subdued every enemy of our souls, we may at length, by Thy grace, be made more than conquerors over every enemy, and over every temptation ; through Him, who hath loved us, JESUS CHRIST, our SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXIII.

GENESIS, XL. & XLI.

XL. 1 *The butler and baker of Pharaoh in prison.* 4 *Joseph hath charge of them.* 5 *He interpreteth their dreams.* 20 *They come to pass according to his interpretation.* 23 *The ingratitude of the butler.*—XLI. 1 *Pharaoh's two dreams.* 25 *Joseph interpreteth them.* 33 *He giveth Pharaoh counsel.* 38 *Joseph is advanced.* 50 *He begetteth Manasseh and Ephraim.* 53 *The famine beginneth.*

AND it came to pass after these things, *that* the butler of the king of Egypt and *his* baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt.

2 And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

3 And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph *was* bound.

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

5 ¶ And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his

dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which *were* bound in the prison.

6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they *were* sad.

7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that *were* with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye *so* sadly to-day?

8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and *there is* no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, *Do* not interpretations *belong* to God? tell me *them*, I pray you.

9 And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine *was* before me;

10 And in the vine *were* three branches: and it *was* as though it budded, *and* her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes:

11 And Pharaoh's cup *was* in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

12 And Joseph said unto him, This *is* the interpretation of it: The three branches *are* three days:

13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also *was* in my dream, and, behold, *I had* three white baskets on my head:

17 And in the uppermost basket *there was* of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

18 And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets *are* three days:

19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang

thee on a tree ; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

20 ¶ And it came to pass the third day, *which was* Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants : and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again ; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand :

22 But he hanged the chief baker : as Joseph had interpreted to them.

23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

XLI. 1 AND it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed : and, behold, he stood by the river.

2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed ; and they fed in a meadow.

3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed ; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river.

4 And the ill favoured and leanfleshed

kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

6 And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, *it was* a dream.

8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but *there was* none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

9 ¶ Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

10 Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, *both* me and the chief baker:

11 And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

12 And *there was* there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of

the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

13 And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

14 ¶ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved *himself*, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and *there is* none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, *that* thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *It is* not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

18 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

19 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and

leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness :

20 And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine :

21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them ; but they *were* still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good :

23 And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, *and* blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them :

24 And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears : and I told *this* unto the magicians ; but *there was* none that could declare *it* to me.

25 ¶ And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh *is* one : God hath shewed Pharaoh what He *is* about to do.

26 The seven good kine *are* seven years ; and the seven good ears *are* seven years : the dream *is* one.

27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them *are* seven years ; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28 This *is* the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh : What God *is* about to do He sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt :

30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine ; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt ; and the famine shall consume the land ;

31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following ; for it *shall be* very grievous.

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice ; *it is* because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

37 ¶ And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as this *is*, a man in whom the Spirit of God *is*?

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, *there is none* so discreet and wise as thou *art*:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him *ruler* over all the land of Egypt.

44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I *am* Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

46 ¶ And Joseph *was* thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which *was* round about every city, laid he up in the same.

49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for *it was* without number.

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, *said he*, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

53 ¶ And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy *corn*; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

COMMENTARY.

IT pleased GOD, before He made Himself fully known by the Gospel, to reveal Himself often to His faithful servants by signs and wonders; in particular He governed His chosen people, the Jews, by extraordinary providences; He wrought many miracles, in order to their establishment as a nation; and pursued one connected plan, in respect to them. The dreams, of which we have now read, had, for their object, the elevation of Joseph to power; and were a link in the chain of successive events. If the chief butler had not dreamt, Joseph would not have been requested to give an interpretation of the dream; and if he had not been resorted to, the skill which GOD gave to Joseph, in interpreting, would not have been known to the chief butler. If this skill had not been known to the chief butler, he would not have mentioned Joseph to Pharaoh; and if moreover the chief baker had not had a dream which was also interpreted by Joseph, the chief butler might not have been sufficiently confident of Joseph's skill, to have spoken to Pharaoh so strongly in his favour. Again, if Pharaoh had not also dreamt, no one would have thought of Joseph. Here then is a succession of miraculous interpositions, all calculated to bring about the deliverance of Joseph. GOD indeed could have rescued him by other and

even simpler means. He could have caused the prison doors to fly open, as was done in the case of His servant Peter on another occasion : but He chose, in this case, rather to accomplish His purpose in a slower manner, for reasons best known to Himself. GOD, it may be observed, acted then, as He acts now, the immediate miracle excepted. He brought about His own ultimate designs, by the means of a long series of events.

But what an honour was it to Joseph that God should so signally interfere for him. Oh how safe are they, who are under the care of the Most High! Gates, and bars, and battlements, and towers, and persecutions, and distresses ; the false accusations of enemies, and the temporary forgetfulness of earthly friends, who are often as ready to promise, as they are slow to perform : — all — all shall only work for their deliverance, and for their final and eternal good ; for all events are means in the hands of Him, who will infallibly exalt them at the last. Joseph would have never been the second man in Egypt, and the person to deal out corn to the chief people of surrounding countries, if he had not first been conducted through those scenes of trouble and disgrace, of which we have been reading.

We learn then, from this part of the history of Joseph, to trust GOD ; to believe in His providence ; and to wait patiently for the event. Let us ever remember, that He ruleth over all : — that

He hath every heart, and every hand, in His power.

We are now entering upon the period of the formation of the Jewish Church. The whole family of Jacob came to dwell with Joseph in Egypt; and, after having been for a while grievously oppressed in that country, they were led forth by Moses and Aaron, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, and were formed into that distinct people, by whom the worship of the true God was maintained, a people among whom Christ the Saviour was born, and to whom He was more immediately sent.

How small were the first circumstances which opened the way to these prodigious events! The very formation of this Jewish Church, to which the promises of Christ were given, — of that Church, on the foundation of which the Christian Church was built, — turned on those little events of a butler and a baker. So is it still. Small matters often produce the most important consequences. What was it that brought into one family those who are here come together? Perhaps some little casualty, some exceedingly insignificant circumstance, something which at the time hardly engaged a thought. God however was giving an important turn to our lives by means of these trifling events: and in this manner does He continually work. May we see His hand in all things, and learn from the Scripture History to believe in

that particular and never-ceasing Providence which governs this changing world.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, whose Providence is over all Thy works, and who failest not to deliver Thy people out of all their trouble ; who didst save Noah, from the flood of waters ; and Lot, from the destruction of Sodom ; who didst lead Abraham Thy servant, by a way which he knew not, making him the father of many nations ; who didst deliver Thy servant Joseph from the hand of all his enemies, exalting him to great honour ; who didst, also, afterwards lead forth Thy people, as sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron ; give us grace, we beseech Thee, still to see Thine hand in all things ; and still to trust Thy power, and to feel ourselves under Thy protection.

O Thou, who art the Shepherd of Israel, take us under Thy guidance ; and keep Thy watchful care over us. Defend us from all harm ; and carry us through all dangers. Deliver us from the fear of our enemies ; and be with us, by night and by day ; and save us from all evil. Be Thou, O LORD, our sun and our shield ; and, at length, our exceeding great reward.

We acknowledge, O LORD, that providential mercy, which hath attended us through our past lives. Often hast Thou led us by the hand, when

we have not thought of our Divine Leader. Thou hast sent afflictions, which have been blessings in disguise. Thou hast put difficulties in our way, which have been the means of bringing us out into the light. Thou hast sent doubts and fears into our minds, to be the forerunner of faith in CHRIST, and of a cheerful hope in our REDEEMER.

We desire, O LORD, to trust Thee, for the time which is to come: and we pray, that, by taking heed both to Thy word, and to the past experience of our own hearts, we may learn more steadfastly to put our trust in Thee; and to stay ourselves upon our GOD. May we be willing, also, to go through evil report, and good report. If we should be defamed, may we kindly entreat those who defame us: and if persecuted, may we cheerfully suffer it. May our eye be fixed on Thee, amidst all the injuries of man, or the evil words which are spoken against us: and may we wait, with patience, for that day, when all, which is crooked, shall be made straight; and when that which is yet dark, shall be fully revealed.

O LORD, teach us both to fulfil Thy precepts, and to suffer all Thy pleasure. May our faith be strong; and our hope rise higher, day by day. May we put away our various cares about the things of this world; and may our reward be on high; and though we live in an evil and a complaining world, may we be thankful and con-

tented, because the LORD is our portion, and the lot of our inheritance.

And pardon, we pray Thee, all those who are our enemies; and who have either neglected to repay their obligations to us, or have done, or wished, us evil. Grant, that we may never render railing for railing; but contrariwise, may we bless our persecutors. May we labour still to do them good; and, if it please Thee to give us the opportunity, give us the heart also, to serve our fellow-creatures, by comforting them in their afflictions, and by administering to their necessities.

These, and all other blessings, which we need, we humbly ask, in the name, and for the sake, of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXIV.

GENESIS, XLII.

1 *Jacob sendeth his ten sons to buy corn in Egypt. 16 They are imprisoned by Joseph for spies. 18 They are set at liberty, on condition to bring Benjamin. 21 They have remorse for Joseph. 24 Simeon is kept for a pledge. 25 They return with corn, and their money. 29 Their relation to Jacob. 36 Jacob refuseth to send Benjamin.*

Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another ?

2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt : get you down thither, and buy for us from thence ; that we may live, and not die.

3 ¶ And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren ; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

5 And the sons of Israel came to buy *corn* among those that came : for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

6 And Joseph *was* the governor over the land, *and he it was* that sold to all the people

of the land : and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him *with* their faces to the earth.

7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them ; and he said unto them, Whence come ye ? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

9 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye *are* spies ; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

11 We *are* all one man's sons ; we *are* true men, thy servants are no spies.

12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13 And they said, Thy servants *are* twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan ; and, behold, the youngest *is* this day with our father, and one *is* not.

14 And Joseph said unto them, That *is it* that I spake unto you, saying, Ye *are* spies :

15 Hereby ye shall be proved : By the life

of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether *there be any* truth in you : or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye *are* spies.

17 And he put them all together into ward three days.

18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live ; *for* I fear God :

19 If ye *be* true *men*, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison : go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses :

20 But bring your youngest brother unto me ; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

21 ¶ And they said one to another, We *are* verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ; and ye would not hear ? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood *them*; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

25 ¶ Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

27 And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it *was* in his sack's mouth.

28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, *it is* even in my sack: and their heart failed *them*, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this *that* God hath done unto us?

29 ¶ And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell them; saying,

30 The man, *who is* the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

31 And we said unto him, *We are true men*; we are no spies :

32 *We be* twelve brethren, sons of our father; one *is* not, and the youngest *is* this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

33 And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye *are true men*; leave one of your brethren *here* with me, and take *food for* the famine of your households, and be gone :

34 And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye *are* no spies, but *that ye are true men*: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land.

35 ¶ And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack: and when *both* they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of *my children*: Joseph *is* not, and Simeon *is* not, and ye will take Benjamin *away*: all these things are against me.

37 And Reuben spake unto his father,

saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee : deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

38 And he said, My son shall not go down with you ; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone : if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

COMMENTARY.

WE see here the effects of a guilty conscience ! The sons of Jacob are no sooner charged with being spies, and cast for a few days into prison, than they remember what they had done, many years before, to their brother, and cry out, “ We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.”

Did you never feel the same kind of terror pursuing you, when you had done something amiss ? Did you never imagine that every one, whom you met, observed you ; and that every little misfortune, which befell you, was the consequence of your guilt ? Sin does not always leave this sting behind it ; nevertheless, it often does.

If the sin have been greater than ordinary, if there have been something striking in it, like the act of selling or killing a brother, then many a pang will probably be felt by even a very wicked man ;

for conscience has some power of troubling even the impenitent : and it is a great mercy, that this is the case. How unhappy do these brethren of Joseph now appear, in comparison with Joseph ! How are their circumstances changed ! A while ago they were full of envy ; and said, as they saw Joseph walk up to them, “ Behold this dreamer cometh : ” — now, they bow themselves before him with their faces to the earth. Thus are these men lowered by their guilt. It is true, that, whether guilty or innocent, they would equally have bowed themselves before the ruler of Egypt : but their own guilt was the cause of the elevation of the very man, before whom they bowed. They are rendered low, through the indulgence of that very pride which had seemed to exalt them.

So is it now. Men, through pride, or through passion which is inflamed by pride, are hurried into some wicked action ; and soon their wickedness finds them out. They see, that the hour of their detection is approaching ; and they tremble at the dreadful discovery, which is on the point of taking place. They perhaps consult with the partners of their iniquity, as Joseph’s brethren did with each other. Perhaps also, like those brethren, they now become involved in dispute ; and he, who, like Reuben, happens to have the least share in the guilt, begins to raise his voice, and remind the others of his comparative innocence. Men in these cases are driven to a variety of expedients. One common

way of the wicked is to dwell much on some little part of their conduct, for which they are blamed, or think that they are blamed, while as to this particular they are innocent. To be thus unjustly injured is a great relief to the wounded conscience. The sinner is now furnished with a subject, on which he can think with complacency; and on which therefore his mind loves to dwell. In this manner we may account for the pleasure with which the sons of Jacob appear to tell their father of their having been mistaken for spies. Being burthened with a guilty conscience, they would feel some relief in relating how they had been unreasonably suspected, imprisoned, and ill-treated, for their father's sake. They would seem to themselves to have made some atonement for that injury which they had done to their father, in Joseph's case. But let us not imitate the brethren of Joseph. If we have done some great wrong, it is better at once to confess the wrong, than to turn our conversation to some smaller point, in which it may be true that we have done right. We cannot too soon repent, nor too soon profess our repentance.

How much more honourably would the sons of Jacob have acted, if they had at once freely confessed their guilt in the matter of Joseph! Their crime continued to be concealed only for a few weeks; and they lost the credit of being the discoverers of it. We wish to spare ourselves by hiding our sins; but we do but increase our trou-

ble. We think to save our credit ; but we only augment our disgrace. True repentance disposes a man to the ingenuous acknowledgement of his transgressions. It makes a man anxious to repair whatever injury to his fellow-creatures he may have done. It renders him more fearful of sinning, than of suffering ; and more in awe of GOD, than of man.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, merciful and gracious, who pardonest iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet requirest that all those, who pray to be forgiven, should have truly repented of their sins ;—give us grace, we beseech Thee, carefully to examine into all the evils of our past lives, that our sins may not be forgotten, nor unrepented of, by us. O deliver us from a burthened and guilty conscience, as well as from indifference and unconcern about the evil which has proceeded from us. May we know ourselves ; and whereinsoever we have transgressed, may we learn to abhor ourselves ; and to repent, in dust and ashes. May we, especially on every occasion of uniting in Thy worship, make diligent search into our past lives ; in order that, having found out every sin, in which we may, at any time, have indulged, we may bewail it before Thee ; and may implore Thy forgiveness, in the name of JESUS CHRIST. And grant, that we may never be weary of this necessary work ; and turn aside to other

objects: but when Thou sendest Thine arrows of conviction into our hearts, and when our conscience rises up, and condemns us, O let us not quench Thy Spirit; but let us fall down before Thee, imploring Thee to increase our sense of the wickedness which we have done; and to give us that repentance, which is not to be repented of.

Deliver us, O LORD, from listening to those teachers, who would heal the wound of Thy people slightly; who would preach comfort, when there is no true sorrow for sin, no constant mortification of sin in the heart, no care to put away the evil and forbidden thing. May we be anxious chiefly to overcome our sinful desires; to subdue our evil tempers; to obtain a tender conscience, and a heart right with GOD; and to feel humble and self-condemned for all our past offences;—anxious to un-say all which we have said amiss, and to undo all which we have done amiss:—that so, we may know our repentance to be sincere, and our sorrow to be unfeigned.

And, O LORD, help us to remember, that there is nothing hidden, which shall not be made manifest; nor secret, which shall not be known. Thine eye seeth us, in our secret retirements; and hath observed all the actions of our past lives. Yea, all the thoughts of our hearts are fully known unto Thee. Preserve us from too great anxiety to conceal our sins from man; lest we be thereby ensnared. May the burthen of them be so great,

that it may seem to us a small thing to be judged of man's judgement :— for He, that judgeth us, is the LORD. May we confess them at all times, both in Thy sight, and, as far as becomes us, in the sight of all men.

And, O LORD, grant unto us that humble faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, whereby all, who believe, become justified from all things, from which, by the Law, they could not be justified. May we look to JESUS as the Lamb of GOD, who, in due time, was offered up to take away the sins of the world :— By Him, therefore, as the great propitiation for sin, may we approach Thee, without fear ; and worship Thee, without distraction. May we draw near unto Thee, through Him, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. May His righteousness be on us ; and may the garment of His salvation cover us. And, being thus justified by faith, may we have peace with GOD, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD, waiting for that happy time, when He— who died for us, the just for the unjust, and who was offered for our sins— shall appear again the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

Hear, O LORD, and answer all our supplications ; for the sake of the same JESUS CHRIST, our only SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXV.

GENESIS, XLIII.

1 *Jacob is hardly persuaded to send Benjamin. 15 Joseph entertaineth his brethren. 31 He maketh them a feast.*

AND the famine was sore in the land.

2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.

4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food :

5 But if thou wilt not send *him*, we will not go down : for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.

6 And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, *as* to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother ?

7 And they said, The man asked us straitly

of our state, and of our kindred, saying, *Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother?* and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, *Bring your brother down?*

8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, *and* also our little ones.

9 I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:

10 For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

11 And their father Israel said unto them, *If it must be* so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry *it* again in your hand; peradventure it *was* an oversight:

13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:

14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved *of my children*, I am bereaved.

15 ¶ And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring *these* men home, and slay, and make ready; for *these* men shall dine with me at noon.

17 And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

19 And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house,

20 And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

21 And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, *every* man's money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand.

22 And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.

23 And he said, Peace *be* to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

24 And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.

25 And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

26 ¶ And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

27 And he asked them of *their* welfare, and said, *Is* your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? *Is* he yet alive?

28 And they answered, Thy servant our father *is* in good health, he *is* yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, *Is* this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yern upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there.

31 And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.

33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

34 And he took *and sent* messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was

five times so much as any of their's. And they drank, and were merry with him.

COMMENTARY.

“ALL these things,” (said Jacob in the former chapter) “are against me* ;” while in truth they were for him, since they were preparing the way to the restoration of his lost son, and for the removal of his whole family into the plentiful land of Egypt. So blind is man to the consequences of those events which are befalling him! It is not improbable, that the sons of Jacob might become men of a suspicious character, through their consciousness of guilt in having once sold their brother. Jacob however was more disturbed, than they, at the thought of their return to Egypt; for he had already, as he imagined, lost his favourite Joseph; and he seemed in danger of being deprived of his son Simeon also; since Simeon was only to be redeemed by allowing Benjamin to be carried away. We therefore cannot wonder, that the unhappy Jacob, bowed down with age, exclaimed, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away*.” But what could he do? the famine increased; and the bread brought from Egypt was nearly consumed. The sons of Jacob, therefore, trembling with fear, and using

* Gen. xlii. 36.

many new precautions in order to avoid giving offence to Joseph, at length depart, taking Benjamin in their company.

This is a picture of what sometimes happens to us. GOD purposes to shew us some great mercy, just as He now was intending mercy to the family of Jacob; but the way to the desired object is dark and intricate. We have to pass through some gloomy paths, which we fear to tread; through some road which seems to run in a direction contrary to that which we deem the right one; so that we can hardly be persuaded to advance; and we cry out with Jacob, "All these things are against me;" but we are forced forwards by some imperious necessity. We hang back indeed, like Jacob and his sons: but GOD places us in such a situation that the utmost peril awaits us, if we do not proceed. With heavy heart, with a complaining tongue, and with weeping eyes, we advance in this our path to happiness; for we do not yet perceive GOD's hand in the dispensation. We judge by appearances; we are unreasonable in our fears; and we quarrel with our chief blessings.

Many a one, no doubt, has had his soul saved in the same manner, as these men had their lives preserved, namely through the medium of events which they considered as the sorest evil.

O let us commit ourselves to Him who can "bring the blind by a way that they knew not," and "in paths that they have not known;" who

can “make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*.” These things will He do unto us (if we are indeed His servants), and will not forsake us. It is pleasing to meditate on the events of Providence, and to apply them to our own case. It is pleasing to read of them in Scripture. How interesting a doctrine is it, that all things are appointed by God, and are all tending to that righteous and blessed purpose which He has in view. While, then, we trace the circumstances of Joseph’s life, let us turn our thoughts to those of our own life also. Recollect, has there been nothing, in any of your histories, corresponding with the story which you have heard? Have you never complained of that, on account of which you now see that you ought to have rejoiced? Have you never been reluctantly carried forward by God, like these sons of Jacob, to your own happiness and deliverance? We are at this day ignorant of what is hereafter to come upon us. We are all, like Jacob and his sons, uninformed of all which is future in our history; but soon, our whole tale shall be told; and, as it is now plain to every reader who knows the conclusion of the history of Joseph, that the fears, once indulged by his family, were vain and foolish; so to the believer, when, hereafter, his whole story shall be known, when not only the events of this life, but the influence of

* Isaiah, xlii. 16.

those events on his everlasting condition, shall be understood, will it be manifest, that a divine hand was continually leading him.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD, our Heavenly FATHER, who hast supported us from our youth up until now, directing our steps, as well as maintaining our lives, and often restraining our folly; we thank Thee, for the many deliverances which Thou hast wrought out for us; for the great mercy, which hath followed us; and for the many blessings and comforts which we at this moment enjoy; and which we entirely owe to Thy over-ruling Providence and watchful care over us. We acknowledge, that we are blind, and ignorant, and altogether unable to judge what is best for us:—we are prone continually to refuse the good, and to choose the evil; and, if left to ourselves, we run in a thousand ways to our own destruction.

O LORD, we would adore both the riches of Thy grace, and the goodness of Thy Providence: by which we are blest, even beyond what we desire, or deserve; and by means, also, which have often seemed the most unlikely to us. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we would magnify Thy name, O THOU GOD of all grace and mercy, for what we have already experienced, of Thy tender compassion, and love to us, the sinful sons of

men : and O give us faith, ever, to look forward to the Day, when all, which is still dark in Thy dispensations, shall be cleared up ; when all, which is crooked, shall be made straight ; when it shall fully appear, that the Judge of all the earth hath done right ; and when Thy saints shall rejoice with exceeding joy, while they look back to many a dark and intricate path, through which Thou hast led them. May we be of the number of those, who trust Thy power ; and who, as we walk through this discouraging and trying world, put confidence in our Divine Leader. May we see the finger of GOD, in the events of our past lives ; and also in those events, which are now happening to us. And, O grant, that, having secured Thy favour, being accepted in CHRIST Thy SON, and walking in the light of Thy countenance, we may have the daily and hourly consolation of believing, that all things are working together for our good. In sickness, may we trust Thee ; in trouble, may we repose ourselves on Thee ; and, when we are either in the midst of scenes of temptation, or when we are entering upon them, may we both call upon Thee as the LORD our strength, and believe in Thee as our Helper and Redeemer.

We pray Thee to keep us from every sin, this day ; and to turn every event thereof, both great and small, to our spiritual good. O give us not over to the power of evil : leave us not to the

hands of our enemies: grant that no weapon formed against us may prosper; grant that every fear, which we have entertained, may in Thy due time be dispersed; that every temptation may be weakened; and that every doubt and difficulty, which still hangs about us, may be removed.

And even, when we come to die, and when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, may the LORD still be our shepherd; so that we may not want; and may His rod and His staff comfort us. May we, at that awful hour, know in whom we have believed; and having experienced the loving kindness of the LORD in the land of the living, may we have hope also in our death; having put our trust in CHRIST, in whom none ever trusted, and were confounded.

O LORD, hear us in these our imperfect prayers; and bless, we earnestly beseech Thee, every member of this family; by pouring down not only Thy temporal but Thy best spiritual blessings upon us.

We ask all, in the name, and for the sake, of
JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXVI.

GENESIS, XLIV.

1 *Joseph's policy to stay his brethren.* 14 *Judah's humble supplication to Joseph.*

AND he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks *with* food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

4 *And* when they were gone out of the city, *and* not *yet* far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

5 *Is* not this *it* in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

6 ¶ And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

7 And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:

8 Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

9 With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

10 And he said, Now also *let it be* according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

11 Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

12 And he searched, *and* began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

13 Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

14 ¶ And Judah and his brethren came to

Joseph's house ; for he *was* yet there : and they fell before him on the ground.

15 And Joseph said unto them, What deed *is* this that ye have done ? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine ?

16 And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord ? what shall we speak ? or how shall we clear ourselves ? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants : behold, we *are* my lord's servants, both we, and *he* also with whom the cup is found.

17 And he said, God forbid that I should do so : *but* the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant ; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

18 ¶ Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant : for thou *art* even as Pharaoh.

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother ?

20 And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one ; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father : for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.

23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

24 And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

25 And our father said, Go again, *and* buy us a little food.

26 And we said, We cannot go down : if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down : for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother *be* with us.

27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two *sons* :

28 And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces ; and I saw him not since :

29 And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

30 Now therefore when I come to thy ser-

vant my father, and the lad *be* not with us ; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

31 It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad *is* not *with us*, that he will die : and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord ; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad *be* not with me ? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

COMMENTARY.

IF the story of Joseph's brethren were to end here, how unequal would the dispensations of Providence towards them appear ! Many years before, they sold their brother, and met with no punishment or blame. Now they do their duty, in going down to buy corn for their aged father and family ; and

they come into great tribulation on this account. Thus they seem to suffer, when doing right, and not to suffer, when doing wrong. If therefore, putting ourselves in the place of Joseph's brethren, we should reason only from a view of the present hour, we might naturally be led to say, Surely there is no GOD who judgeth in the earth; and there is no use in serving Him;—there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; there is even an advantage on the side of wickedness; for do not Joseph's brethren suffer, though conscious of present integrity; whereas, by selling their brother, they obtained twenty pieces of silver? Such would be the natural impression, if the story of Joseph's brethren closed with this chapter.

Let us pursue the observation, and apply it to ourselves. We often profit for a time by some evil which we have done; or at least we suffer from it no present punishment. Our fraud, our violence, succeeds; and it sometimes happens, (as it did in the case of Joseph's brethren,) that whole years roll on, without our perceiving any consequences. Perhaps, on the other hand, we are injured, or discredited, by some part of our conduct in which we have been blameless. Have you never felt yourself tempted to deny a Providence on such occasions? Have circumstances of this kind never caused at least a momentary suspicion, that the world was not governed by righteous laws? We may, however, reply to ourselves, or to any other

persons, under the pressure of this temptation, — as we should have replied to Joseph's brethren, if they, at this period of their history, had questioned the existence of a good Providence: — “Recollect that, as yet, your history is but half over. Wait the issue. See, whether you will not be sorry for all which you have ever done amiss; and happy, in the thought of every thing which, through the grace of God, you may have ever done according to His will.”

Joseph's brethren lived to feel the mortification of being publicly known to have sold their brother, as we shall find in the next chapter: they also lived to see their innocence, in the matter of the silver cup, perfectly cleared up. Sins committed in early life often produce their consequences at the end of it. How many pay the penalty of youthful crimes, by some grievous disease, or by bitter woe, suffered in extreme old age! How many have, like the brethren of Joseph, preserved their character for many years, whose secret wickedness has at last been openly proclaimed. How many, after having been high in reputation, have sunk down into disgrace; not through some new sin into which they have fallen, but through the discovery of some old sin, of which possibly they had already repented in secret!

Let us dread sin; for either sooner or later, either in this world or the next, it will, if unrepented of, be sure to find us out. There are

many whom the remembrance of some old sin is gnawing like a secret worm ; insomuch that the very publishing of their shame might prove even a relief : for the greatest pangs are often those which we conceal. A chief part of our pain may consist in the consciousness of most undeservedly possessing a fair character in the world. Beware, therefore, lest you fall, like the brethren of Joseph, into some dreadful crime :—you may be rendered by it fearful and suspicious through life ; and, if restored to peace, it will perhaps only be when your guilt has, like theirs, been published ; and when you have been rebuked for it, both before God, and before man.

But even although in this world our unrepented sin may be unpunished, yet a day of retribution is at hand. Soon, the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open ; and “ God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil*.”

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art the righteous Governor of the world, and whose eyes run to and fro, beholding all the children of men, grant us a true faith in Thee ; that so, whatever may be the pleasure, and advantage, obtained from sin

* Eccles. xii. 14.

in this world, we may be kept from it, through our belief in that world which is to come. Thou hast appointed a day, O LORD, in which Thou wilt judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom Thou hast ordained: and Thy wrath hath been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and against those who hold the truth in unrighteousness, professing to believe in Thy name, though they sin, even as others.

We pray that we may lay to heart that Day of future Judgement; and that we may feel habitually impressed with a just sense of our condition in this world, as creatures made by Thine hand, preserved in life by Thy continual power, instructed by Thy lively word; who are soon also about to appear before Thee in Judgement. O LORD, suffer us not to be led away by the error of the wicked; who say, in their hearts, "there is no GOD:" who wait not with patience to see the end of Thy dispensations; but through unbelief, continually stumble, and fall; but, as Thou often triest our faith, by withholding both Thy judgements, and Thy mercies; so do Thou strengthen our graces also, by every exercise of them; and grant, that, by reading Thy Holy word, and meditating on Thy promises in JESUS CHRIST, we may thus obtain strong consolation; and learn, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, to have continual hope.

And, O LORD, suffer not our faith to fail, what-

ever discouragements we may meet with, in passing through this sinful and disordered world. May we neither repine at Thy dispensations, nor grow unbelieving under them ; and when we see the ungodly prosper, or the righteous soul brought low, may we learn, only so much the more confidently, to look to the end of all things, when Thou wilt justify Thy saints ; and wilt shew forth their righteousness, as the light, and their judgement, as the noon day : and when Thou wilt also plenteously reward the evil doer.

We acknowledge, O LORD, that, through the weakness of our nature, and our subjection to temporal and present things, we are sore let and hindered in running the race which is set before us : and that, instead of looking to that eternal weight of glory, which Thou hast set before us, we are too prone to seek a reward in this world ; and to be unwilling to bear up, under the evils of this life, and under the various crosses and troubles and disappointments, which befall us. We pray, that we may view Thine hand even in these, and may not complain of any short-lived difficulty or trouble.

We thank Thee for every affliction which Thou hast removed ; for every trial which Thou hast lessened ; and for every misfortune which Thou hast turned into a blessing. We would submit to every frowning providence ; remembering, that it is the LORD, who ruleth over all ; and that,

in His own good time, He can appear for the deliverance of those who put their trust in Him.

Help us to put our confidence in Thee, this day ; and so to walk with Thee, in all the ways of Thy commandments and ordinances, blameless, that, at length, through the merits of our Redeemer, we may be admitted to Thy Kingdom above, where there shall be no more trouble, or affliction, and no more sickness, or sorrow, or pain ; but where all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes.

We ask every blessing for this world, and for that which is to come, — every mercy for our bodies, and for our souls, — from Thy Providence, and Thy Grace, through Him, who died to save us, and ever liveth to make intercession for us, JESUS CHRIST, our LORD.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXVII.

GENESIS, XLV.

1 *Joseph maketh himself known to his brethren. 5 He comforteth them in God's providence. 9 He sendeth for his father. 16 Pharaoh confirmeth it. 21 Joseph furnisheth them for their journey, and exhorteth them to concord. 25 Jacob is revived with the news.*

THEN Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I *am* Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I *am* Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry

with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now *it was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet *there are* five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that *it is* my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen ; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept ; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them : and after that his brethren talked with him.

16 ¶ And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come : and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye ; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan ;

1 And take your father and your households, and come unto me : and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

19 Now thou art commanded, this do ye ; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt

for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

20 Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt *is* your's.

21 And the children of Israel did so : and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

22 To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver, and five changes of raiment.

23 And to his father he sent after this *manner*; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

24 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

25 ¶ And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father,

26 And told him, saying, Joseph *is* yet alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

27 And they told him all the words of

Joseph, which he had said unto them : and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived :

28 And Israel said, *It is enough ;* Joseph my son *is yet alive :* I will go and see him before I die.

COMMENTARY.

How amiable, as well as affecting, is the conduct of Joseph, as it is described in this chapter ! He can now no longer contain himself ; “ Joseph wept aloud and said unto his brethren, I am Joseph ; ” instantly adding, “ Doth my father yet live ? ” But “ his brethren could not answer him ; for they were troubled at his presence. ” Oh what a source of trouble is sin ! It causes trouble at those moments which ought to be devoted to joy. It spreads a gloom over our happiest hours. While the surrounding persons are giving vent to the most delightful emotions, it communicates to the guilty man a double pang ; for he is pained both by remorse of conscience, and by the mortification arising from the general joy, which is abounding.

The sin of Joseph’s brethren not only was brought to their mind by the present happy event ; it had also led to it. How astonishing are the ways of Providence ! “ Does God employ the

sins of men for the accomplishment of His own purposes?" Undoubtedly, He does. The subject is difficult and mysterious; and it ought to be most cautiously treated. Nevertheless, this story distinctly shews, that the Almighty can bring good out of man's evil; and can employ the very crimes of His creatures, as His means of conveying His greatest blessings. GOD is not the author of evil. He tempteth no man; for "let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of GOD: for GOD cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*." Whenever GOD turns the rebellion of His enemies to the furtherance of His own designs, He does this without inviting them to sin, or placing them under any necessity of sinning. They are, therefore, under the burthen of their own guilt.

It is observable that Joseph is represented in this place, as fixing his eye on the mercy manifested by GOD, in permitting him to be sent into Egypt, not on the cruelty of those who sold him; and he encourages his brethren, by calling away their thoughts to the contemplation of the sure goodness of Providence. "Now therefore," he says, "be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for GOD did send me before you, to preserve life." "So now it was not you

* St. James, i. 13, 14.

that sent me hither, but GOD*.” The warmth of Joseph’s affection, as well as the joy, which he felt at the thought of GOD’s gracious dispensation, induced him thus to speak. His brethren had much reason to be grieved and angry with themselves, though they ought not to overlook the mercy now so visible. Surely the kindness of their injured brother was sufficient to melt their hearts, and would tend to increase their self-condemnation. They would now say to themselves, “Are we then guilty of having sold into slavery this kind, this condescending, this excellent brother, who now, instead of lording it over us, — as we might have expected, — is anxious only to comfort us; and though we are guilty, places himself on a level with us.” Let each of us, by the same forgiving spirit, endeavour to subdue those who are at variance with us. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”†

Perhaps we plead that our enemies are incorrigible. But are they worse than the wicked brethren of Joseph? Christ says, “Love your enemies‡;” but we continually devise some reason for not loving them.

Joseph, let it also be noticed, says nothing to his brethren on the subject of repentance. There is a

* Gen. xlv. 5. 8.

† Rom. xii. 20.

‡ St. Matt. v. 44.

time for all things. It was at this moment of great importance, to avoid the appearance of being severe. When men are bowed down with grief, and are almost speechless, and especially when we are the injured party, it is the time to forbear. Kindness may at certain seasons be a more effectual mode of conversion, than the promulgation of the most orthodox doctrine, or the communication of the most faithful reproof. Let us imitate this gentle spirit of Joseph. He stands distinguished on the one hand for charity to his brethren ; and, on the other, for victory over temptation to sin.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, give us grace, we beseech Thee, to profit by Thy written word, and to come with teachable and humble minds to receive the truths which are set before us. May we love the character of Thy saints ; and walk, even as they walked. May we put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and malice, and evil-speaking ; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted as Thy true people are seen to have been, forgiving one another, even as God, for CHRIST'S sake, hath forgiven us.

Deliver us from trusting in any form of godliness, without being thus made partakers of the power thereof. Deliver us from deceiving our own souls, and from being fierce, implacable, and

unmerciful; and teach us to restrain our tempers and our tongues, while we profess to believe in CHRIST, and to be treading that path, which Thy saints have trod, and which leads to everlasting life. May our minds be formed into the image of that mind which was in CHRIST. Like Him, may we be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; determined in resisting an evil world, and in testifying against it; yet full of compassion, and tender mercy; rejoicing, also, with them who rejoice, and weeping with them who weep. O give us fervent charity towards all men. May we love even our enemies; and therein reverence the command and the example of CHRIST, who so loved us, even when we were enemies, as to die for us.

And, after the example also of Thy servant Joseph, may we be ready to forbear, and to forgive, not rendering evil for evil to those who have injured us; but, contrariwise, blessing. May we rejoice, like him, in every opportunity of doing good to those who have both wished and done us evil. And may we so perceive the excellency of this spirit, that no angry passions of our own, no deceit of the flesh, and no snares, or wiles, of the Devil, may draw us away from it.

We would lift up our prayer and intercession, O LORD, at this time, according to Thy commandment, in behalf of those who hate us; we would pray for them, who despitefully use us, and per-

secute us. Forgive, O LORD, their sins against Thee, and against ourselves. O teach them, that, to live in hatred of us, is to live in sin, and to live under Thy displeasure. Pour out upon them the gift of Thy grace, and the consolations of Thy blessed Gospel; and make us now to unite with them as brethren, giving them the right hand of fellowship, and living for the rest of our days in peace and harmony together.

Soften, O LORD, all our hearts, both towards Thee, and towards each other. Let not Thy word, which is given us for our correction and instruction, be daily used in vain. Let us not contend with and resist the truth; remaining unholy in our tempers, and unsubdued by all the examples of Thy people, which Thou hast set before us, and by all the display of Thine own grace, towards us, in the Gospel: but may we be growing up in all things unto the features of those, of whose holiness we read, and especially of Him who lived as our example, and died as our atonement, JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

And forgive, O LORD, all our ignorance, and error, and pride, and self-confidence, and all our contemptuous treatment of others, as well as all our own secret sins, in times past. Instead of judging others, as we are so prone to do, we have reason, each for ourselves, to stand speechless before Thee; when we remember our own hidden iniquities. O let them not be brought forward

against us, before the assembled world, on the Day of Judgement. Forgive us now, O LORD, our trespasses; even as we forgive them who trespass against us. Teach us to feel the weight of those trespasses; yet deliver us from their condemning power. Restore us to Thy favour, which we have all so deservedly lost: and make us to become new creatures in CHRIST JESUS; setting out in a new, and more holy, humble, and affectionate, as well as upright course; partaking henceforth of Thy peace, and being received into Thy family, and accepted through CHRIST, Thy Son.

We present these our imperfect prayers and intercessions; trusting in the great and all-prevailing name of the same JESUS CHRIST, our only SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXVIII.

GENESIS, XLVI. 1—7. 26—34. & XLVII.

XLVI. 1 *Jacob is comforted by God at Beer-sheba.* 5 *Thence he with his company goeth into Egypt.* 28 *Joseph meeteth Jacob.* 31 *He instructeth his brethren how to answer to Pharaoh.*—XLVII. 1 *Joseph presenteth five of his brethren, 7 and his father, before Pharaoh.* 11 *He giveth them habitation and maintenance.* 13 *He getteth all the Egyptians' money,* 16 *their cattle,* 18 *their lands to Pharaoh.* 22 *The priests' land was not bought.* 23 *He letteth the land to them for a fifth part.* 28 *Jacob's age.* 29 *He sweareth Joseph to bury him with his fathers.*

AND Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here *am* I.

3 And He said, I *am* God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up *again*: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5 And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls *were* threescore and six;

27 And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, *were* two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, *were* threescore and ten.

28 ¶ And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him;

and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou *art* yet alive.

31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which *were* in the land of Canaan, are come unto me ;

32 And the men *are* shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle ; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What *is* your occupation ?

34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, *and* also our fathers : that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen ; for every shepherd *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.

XLVII. 1 THEN Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and

all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan ; and, behold, they *are* in the land of Goshen.

2 And he took some of his brethren, *even* five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

3 And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What *is* your occupation ? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants *are* shepherds, both we, *and* also our fathers.

4 They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come ; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks ; for the famine *is* sore in the land of Canaan : now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

5 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee :

6 The land of Egypt *is* before thee ; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell ; in the land of Goshen let them dwell : and if thou knowest *any* men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh : and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old *art* thou?

9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

11 ¶ And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

12 And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to *their* families.

13 ¶ And *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very sore, so that the land of Egypt and *all* the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

15 And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth.

16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

18 When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide *it* from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands:

19 Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give *us* seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate.

20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's.

21 And as for the people, he removed them to cities from *one* end of the borders of Egypt even to the *other* end thereof.

22 Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion *assigned them* of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands.

23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, *here is* seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth *part* unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

26 And Joseph made it a law over the

land of Egypt unto this day, *that* Pharaoh should have the fifth *part*; except the land of the priests only, *which* became not Pharaoh's.

27 ¶ And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

30 But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said.

31 And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

COMMENTARY.

WE now draw near to the end of the history of Jacob. His last were happier than his former days. The antient Patriarch moves with all his family into Egypt, and partakes with them in the prosperity of Joseph. The old man lives seventeen years in that land of plenty. There a numerous generation springs up: and from his twelve sons arise the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus the foundations of the Jewish Church were laid. These great purposes of God were accomplished, not by the wisdom and power of men intending to fulfil them; but through the sovereignty of God directing to His own destined end even the voluntary actions of His creatures, and causing all things to conspire in bringing to pass the counsels of His will. The foolish partiality of Jacob, the dreams of Joseph, the injustice of the brethren of Joseph, the favour of King Pharaoh, the sin of the wife of Potiphar, the miraculous dreams of the butler and of the baker, the plenty in Egypt, and the famine in the surrounding country, the consequent removal of the family of Jacob into Egypt—all and each of these circumstances—were employed by the divine Artificer, in preparing for the great events of which we have now to read. God, then, and not man, formed the Jewish Church: and He has in all ages known how to cause the very wrath

of man to praise Him; rendering the passions of individuals, and the revolutions of nations, instrumental in accomplishing the final triumph of the Redeemer. In the days of Christ, the heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing; the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed. Nevertheless He set His king upon His holy hill of Zion; for they were gathered together, only to do whatsoever His hand and His will determined before to be done. At the time of the Reformation, the selfish and politic designs of some of the reigning princes were again rendered by God remarkably subservient to the establishment of the interests of His spiritual kingdom.

Let us not therefore contemplate only the part performed by man in human transactions. There is One who is higher than the highest; and whose providence ruleth over all; and His care extends to the smallest, as well as to the greatest, of His creatures. May this God be our God! May we be His servants! may the blessing which descended on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob descend also upon us: and may all the events of our lives issue, like those of the life of Jacob, in producing a peaceful evening to our days, and in brightening our prospects both for ourselves and for our posterity.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, whose Providence ruleth over all, and who hath assured us in Thy word, that not so much as a sparrow falleth to the ground without Thy notice ; open Thou our eyes, we beseech Thee, that we may behold Thy hand in all things ; and may thus learn to commit ourselves, with holy trust and confidence, unto Thee.

We desire to adore Thy greatness, Thy majesty, and Thy power. Thou, LORD, in the beginning didst lay the foundations of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands : — from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art GOD : Thou art GOD over all, blessed for evermore. With Thee is no variableness, neither shadow of turning : Thou art the same : and Thy years shall not fail. O LORD, we adore Thee, that Thy throne is established in righteousness ; and that Thy mercy is over all Thy works. The LORD reigneth : let the earth rejoice ; and let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.

We thank Thee, O LORD, for all Thy dispensations towards this our world, which have been ordained in so much love. We thank Thee, that Thou hast so mixed mercy with judgement, causing truth and justice to meet together. We thank Thee for all Thy goodness vouchsafed to the sons of men, for seed-time and harvest, and for the rains from heaven, and fruitful seasons,

filling our hearts with food and gladness. We thank Thee, especially, for sending JESUS CHRIST into the world, who was the seed of the woman, the promised offspring of Abraham, and, in due time, the hope and consolation of Thy people. We thank Thee for that Providence, which laid the foundation for His appearance; and which so ordered all the course of this world as at Thine own set time, foretold by Thy holy prophet, to introduce the coming of our SAVIOUR'S Kingdom.

We bless Thee, also, for that merciful and overruling care, which hath brought the tidings of this salvation to our ears, in this favoured land; and hath not left us to grope in heathen darkness, but hath placed before us this light of life.

We bless Thee for the various means, whereby the several truths of the Gospel have been brought more directly to our minds in this family; and for all the peculiar advantages, which, through Thy more immediate Providence, we enjoy. It is Thou, O LORD, who hast shewn mercy unto us: notwithstanding our ignorance, and folly, and unbelief. And now, O LORD, acknowledging all Thy goodness, and perceiving this Thy tender compassion towards us, we would solemnly and devoutly acknowledge that unseen hand, which hath led us; and hath at length placed us in the heritage of mercy which we enjoy.

Make us now, O LORD, to bless Thee, during the remainder of our days; and to receive into

our hearts that Gospel which Thou hast sent from heaven to save us. May our eyes be often lifted up to Thee as the GOD of our Salvation; may we thank Thee, O FATHER of Mercies, not with our lips only, but in our lives, for all the good things, both temporal and spiritual, which surround us: and may we henceforth walk in love, and dwell together in unity; not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance, but as He, who hath called us is holy, so may we now be holy in all manner of conversation.

Show down Thy blessing also, we beseech Thee, on all our friends, relations, and connexions in life. May they abide in Thy favour, and partake in the light of Thy countenance. May their days on earth, if it please Thee, be prosperous; but especially may their souls be Thine. May they be delivered from distressing want, and from anxious care. May they put their trust in Thy Providence, and find all their need supplied. And having assisted, and strengthened, and comforted each other in our pilgrimage through this life, may we all be permitted at length to meet in that land of everlasting rest, where they go no more out; and where peace, and love, and harmony shall for ever reign.

These blessings we ask in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXIX.

GENESIS, XLVIII. XLIX. 1. 29—33. & L.

XLVIII. 1 *Joseph with his sons visiteth his sick father.* 2 *Jacob strengtheneth himself to bless them.* 3 *He repeateth the promise.* 5 *He taketh Ephraim and Manasseh as his own.* 7 *He telleth Joseph of his mother's grave.* 9 *He blesseth Ephraim and Manasseh.* 17 *He preferreth the younger before the elder.* 21 *He prophesieth their return to Canaan.*—
 XLIX. 1 *Jacob calleth his sons to bless them.* 29. *He chargeth them about his burial.* 33. *He dieth.*—
 L. 1 *The mourning for Jacob.* 4 *Joseph getteth leave of Pharaoh to go to bury him.* 7 *The funeral.* 15 *Joseph comforteth his brethren, who craved his pardon.* 22 *His age.* 23 *He seeth the third generation of his sons.* 24 *He prophesieth unto his brethren of their return.* 25 *He taketh an oath of them for his bones.* 26 *He dieth, and is chested.*

AND it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

2 And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee *for* an everlasting possession.

5 ¶ And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

6 And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet *there was* but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Beth-lehem.

8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who *are* these?

9 And Joseph said unto his father, They *are* my sons, whom God hath given me in this *place*. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for

age, *so that* he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.

11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near unto him.

14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid *it* upon Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

15 ¶ And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers

Abraham and Isaac ; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him : and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father : for this *is* the firstborn ; put thy right hand upon his head.

19 And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it* : he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great : but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh : and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die : but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out

of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

XLIX. 1 AND Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together.—

29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30 In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

32 The purchase of the field and of the cave that *is* therein *was* from the children of Heth.

33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

L. 1 AND Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel.

3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.

4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

5 My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

7 ¶ And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

8 And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their

little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

10 And they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which *is* beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This *is* a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which *is* beyond Jordan.

12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them:

13 For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying-place of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

14 ¶ And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

15 ¶ And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants.

19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

22 ¶ And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house : and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third *generation* : the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die : and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26 So Joseph died, *being* an hundred and ten years old : and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

COMMENTARY.

WE are now at the end of Genesis. Jacob dies ; and Joseph dies also. Immediately after the death of Jacob, the fears of the brethren of Joseph return. They apprehend, that, though he had been kind to them for seventeen years, he would now exercise his vengeance ; being no longer restrained

(as they conceived him to have hitherto been) by respect to their common father. Guilt is unseasonably fearful. How much better had it been to have had their fears excited, when they were occupied at the side of the pit in selling their brother. We do not shudder at the proper time: but, sooner or later, the sinner is made to tremble. He perhaps trembles, even when men have forgotten his transgression, and when GOD has forgiven it.

We are led, by these chapters, to meditate on the mortality of man. The antient patriarchs had little insight into the future world, in comparison with us. When we Christians read the Old Testament, we take advantage of our knowledge of the New, and see the gospel light reflected back on the books of Moses. Little is said of the future world in the passages now before us; and yet we might expect, here if any where, to find the dying saint speak clearly. A general confidence, however, is here expressed, that the promises made by GOD to the patriarchs would be fulfilled; for “Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and GOD will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, GOD will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence*.” In allusion to this passage, it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of

* Gen. i. 24, 25.

the departing of the children of Israel: and gave commandment concerning his bones*.” And in the same Epistle to the Hebrews, it is affirmed, of the patriarchs and saints in general who lived under the old dispensation, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth:” and then follow these further words of the Apostle, “For they, that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.—But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore GOD is not ashamed to be called their GOD; for He hath prepared for them a city †.”

While, therefore, amidst this silence of the Old Testament, we attend these patriarchs to their mournful tomb, let us not forget those consolatory words of the Apostle:—“GOD hath prepared for them a city.” They went from that dark dispensation, under which they lived, and from that world, in which they had experienced so many frowning providences, to “the city of the living GOD, the heavenly Jerusalem ‡,” to that house where “are many mansions §,” to that rest which remaineth for the people of GOD. They lived, like us, by faith; and their faith, though often exercised on temporal promises, had respect to things unseen: they also

* Heb. xi. 22.

† Heb. xi. 13, 14. 16.

‡ Heb. xii. 22.

§ St. John, xiv. 2.

died in faith; and, when the days of their pilgrimage were over, they were joined “to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to JESUS the mediator of the new covenant*.” Their bodies were committed to the dust, by their weeping friends, as ours also soon shall be; but, in the morning of the resurrection, they shall rise with us from the grave. Then, that “cave of the field of Machpelah” which Abraham bought “for a possession of a buryingplace †,” and in which Jacob also was buried, and that coffin, in which Joseph was embalmed, shall each give up their dead.

May these considerations lead us all to remember that we are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth ‡.” We enjoy the bright dispensation of the Gospel. May we then be continually looking for and hasting to the coming of our LORD JESUS, “who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself§.”

* Heb. xii. 23, 24.

† Heb. xi. 13.

‡ Gen. xxiii. 19, 20.

§ Phil. iii. 21.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast appointed the grave to be the end of all living, and who, by the admonitions of Thy word, as well as by the dispensations of Thy providence, art continually reminding us of our mortality, give us grace to lay the thought of our death to heart; that so we may neither be disquieted by the cares of this life, nor tempted into those paths of sin, which will bring misery at the last.

Impress our minds, we beseech Thee, with an habitual sense of the nearness of eternity. May we live, day by day, in view of it: and may we form all our schemes in life, under the habitual thought, how soon death may cut them short; and how suddenly perhaps we may be called to give an account to Him, who made us, of the work in which we are engaged, and of the plans which we are pursuing. O let us not put away these thoughts from us. May those, who are the youngest among us, remember their Creator, in the days of their youth; before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when they shall say, they have no pleasure in them. May those, who are further advanced in years, consider, still more, the shortness, as well as the importance, of life: and whatsoever their hands find to do, may they do it, with all their might; knowing, that there is no work,

or desire, or device, in the grave, whither we are hastening. And give to us all, and especially to the aged, grace to repent, and to turn to GOD, and to lay hold on the promises of CHRIST, before we go hence and are no more seen. O may we grow wiser and better, as we grow older. May we more and more consider our latter end, as it approaches nearer and nearer: and may we all stand ready to meet our Judge; having our loins girded and our lamps burning, that, when He cometh, we may be found watching for His appearance.

Keep us, this day, O LORD, from being too eagerly engaged in the things of this world, and drawn off from the thoughts of the world to come. May we be serious, and sober-minded, and fearful, above all things, of sinning against Thee.

And, O LORD, if any of our past offences should rise up, and seem to condemn us, may we be enabled to look by faith to that LAMB of GOD, who taketh away the sins of the world. May we remember our transgressions, in order to be humbled by them; but may the remembrance of them not so embitter our lives, as to prevent our cheerful hope in CHRIST; nor let them hinder us in now devoting ourselves freely and heartily to Thy service.

We bless Thee, O LORD, for Thy gracious promises made to us in JESUS CHRIST, and for those bright and glorious hopes which Thy Gospel sets before us. We bless Thee for Thy servants, who

have departed this life in Thy faith and fear; and for the cloud of witnesses, who have gone before us. We bless Thee for the example of Thy saints, both living and dying; and for all the benefits of Thy holy word: and we pray, that the more we read and meditate upon it, we may, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, enjoy increasing faith and hope. O LORD, help us now to treasure up what we have this day heard: and, as Thou addest to the number of our days, do Thou more and more incline our hearts unto wisdom.

We ask every blessing, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXX.

EXODUS, I.

- 1 *The children of Israel, after Joseph's death, do multiply.*
 8 *The more they are oppressed by a new king, the more they multiply.* 15 *The godliness of the midwives, in saving the men children alive.* 22 *Pharaoh commandeth the male children to be cast into the river.*

Now these *are* the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.

2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,

3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,

4 Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt *already*.

6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

7 ¶ And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we :

10 Come on, let us deal wisely with them ; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

11 Therefore they did set over them task-masters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour :

14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field : all their service, wherein they made them serve, *was* with rigour.

15 ¶ And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one *was* Shiprah, and the name of the other Puah :

16 And he said, When ye do the office of

a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see *them* upon the stools ; if it *be* a son, then ye shall kill him : but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live.

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive ?

19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women *are* not as the Egyptian women ; for they *are* lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.

20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives : and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.

22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

COMMENTARY.

THE word Exodus means departure ; and the book Exodus contains chiefly the history of the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt. We have in Genesis the account of their coming into Egypt, of their suffering under a grievous famine, and then settling themselves in the fruitful land of Goshen, and of their multiplying, as well as prospering exceedingly, during the life of Joseph. Now the scene changes.—As in the individual histories of Jacob and Joseph, each of which ended happily, there was a variety of Providential dispensations,—a great mixture of good and evil ; so also in the history of the Children of Israel, although it terminated in the establishment of that Jewish Church, which was introductory to the Church of the Messiah, there were many changeful, many most unpromising events. And indeed what are all our lives, but repetitions of the same chequered and oftentimes distressful scene ! Perhaps we set out in life under favourable circumstances ; or we enjoy at least an occasional prosperity. We dwell awhile in some land of Goshen ; but soon the tide of events turns against us. We are crossed in our purposes, disappointed in our expectations, and interrupted in our enjoyments. We are made to drink deeply of the bitter cup of adversity. But

we ought to account ourselves sufficiently happy, if, after our departure out of this world, we reach at last that promised rest, of which the land of Canaan was a type: for then we shall forget all the difficulties of the way, or rather we shall remember them, only with gratitude to Him who has been our deliverer.

We read, in this chapter, that another king arose “which knew not Joseph; and he said unto his people,” — “Come on, let us deal wisely with” these children of Israel, “lest they multiply;” and lest, “when there falleth out any war, they join also our enemies.” “Therefore they did set over them taskmasters, to afflict them with burthens.”

Here is a picture of the beginning of oppression. Tyrants of every class usually plead self-defence as a reason for their severity. “We must be beforehand” (say they) “with these suspicious men, and bring down their power lest they should bring down ours. Let us therefore deal wisely with them.” The wisdom of the world is made up of craftiness, and of injustice. Policy is the pretence of the most abominable and cruel actions. The oppressor values himself for his art of governing; while his subjects feel, that he is ruling them with a rod of iron.

This unjust king proceeds step by step to the utmost pitch of cruelty. He requires all the midwives to slay all the males who are born: but they, though guilty of some prevarication, fear God too

much, to execute the bloody order. Pharaoh then charges all his people to cast into the river every son who should be born unto the Israelites; the daughters only, of whom there could be little fear, being allowed to be kept alive. How should we bless GOD that we live in these better times; that we are neither oppressed, like the Israelites, by severe taskmasters acting under a cruel king, nor compelled to deeds of cruelty, under pain of royal displeasure. The nature of man is the same in all ages. Blessed be GOD for our equal laws, and for our mild and limited government!

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast appointed the bounds of our habitation, and ordained our whole lot in life, we thank Thee, that Thou hast not made the wilderness our habitation, nor a barren land our dwelling. We thank Thee, still more, that Thou hast not placed us under the power of unreasonable and wicked men; nor caused us to wear out our days, as thousands of our fellow-creatures are doing, under the scourge of cruel and severe masters. When we look around, O LORD, on the miseries of the world; and, particularly, when we contemplate the sorrows, which men inflict on each other, by oppression; when we reflect, how often some worldly policy hath been made the apology for in-

justice ; and how much proud anger hath also filled the heart of the oppressors, LORD, how shall we sufficiently thank Thee, that we dwell in a land of comparative peace and quietness, as well as of comfort and prosperity !

O LORD, we pray for those, who, either in this land, or in any other, are suffering under the hand of any persecutor. Pity them, we beseech Thee, under their affliction ; and give them patience, and forbearance, meekness, and resignation to Thy will, and a holy trust in Thee, under all their difficulties. May the Spirit of CHRIST rest upon them, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; who, when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. O turn the hearts also, of their enemies ; may they remember, that Thou regardest the fatherless, and the widow ; and despisest not the cause of the oppressed ; but hast taught us that their cry shall enter into the ears of the LORD of Hosts.

Put a stop, we beseech Thee, to slavery all over the earth ; and to all unbridled power of man over man. Bless the peaceable endeavours of those who labour, truly, and in Thy fear, to improve the civil condition of their fellow-creatures ; and especially to spread the religion of the mild and benevolent JESUS among all mankind.

We pray, also, that war and discord may cease. Continue peace, we pray Thee, to this our land ; and, if it please Thee, send plenty with it.

We would, also, offer up our prayers unto Thee, for all Kings, and for all who are in authority, of whatever kind. Grant them grace to resist the temptations belonging to their stations: and grant us grace also, to consider those temptations; and to exercise charity in judging of them. Especially, we beseech Thee, O LORD, to give to our Queen a wise and understanding heart; that she may rule well that people, over whom Thou hast set her. Bless her royal consort; and continue Thy mercy to this land, by preparing those, who come after her, to rule in Thy faith and fear, and to administer judgement with mercy. *Bless our houses of Parliament, with wisdom and discretion. May they have knowledge to discern their duty; and integrity to fulfil it.* Bless our magistrates; and make them a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them who do well. Give wisdom also to all, whom Thou hast intrusted with any power, or influence. Incline masters of families to govern well their households. And, O send abroad a spirit of religion amongst us; that all may remember, that they have a Master in Heaven, unto whom they must give account.

Pour out, we beseech Thee, among those who are governed, a spirit of willing subjection to their superiors. Give them a hearty zeal to fulfil the duties of their place; remembering, that the lowest servant of man is nevertheless the LORD's freed-man: and that, of the LORD, he shall receive his

inheritance. And help us, we beseech Thee, to adorn, each of us, our stations ; and to recommend, both by word and deed, that peace and quietness, that thankfulness and contentment, and that charity and mercy, toward each other, for which we have now made our prayers.

These things we ask for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, our SAVIOUR.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXI.

EXODUS, II.

1 *Moses is born, 3 and in an ark cast into the flags. 5 He is found, and brought up by Pharaoh's daughter. 11 He slayeth an Egyptian. 13 He reproveth an Hebrew. 15 He fleeth into Midian. 21 He marrieth Zipporah. 22 Gershom is born. 23 God respecteth the Israelites' cry.*

AND there went a man of the house of Levi, and took *to wife* a daughter of Levi.

2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son : and when she saw him that he *was a goodly child*, she hid him three months.

3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein ; and she laid *it* in the flags by the river's brink.

4 And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

5 ¶ And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash *herself* at the river ; and her maidens walked along by the river's side ;

and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

6 And when she had opened *it*, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, *This is one of the Hebrews' children.*

7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

9 And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give *thee* thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.

10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

11 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that *there was* no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

14 And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew *water*, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

17 And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

18 And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How *is it that* ye are come so soon to day?

19 And they said, An Egyptian delivered

us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew *water* enough for us, and watered the flock.

20 And he said unto his daughters, And where *is* he? why *is* it *that* ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.

21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

22 And she bare *him* a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

23 ¶ And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*.

COMMENTARY.

WE have abundant proof, in Scripture, that the purposes of GOD are not to be defeated by the wrath and malice of man ; and that the very wickedness of sinners is often over-ruled, for the more exact accomplishment of the divine counsels. The cruel law, which sentenced to death all the male children of the Israelites, threatened the extinction of their race ; and seemed to defeat the predictions of favour to the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But that dreadful edict, of which we have spoken, was the very circumstance, which occasioned the exposure of Moses in a cradle of bulrushes : his exposure led the daughter of Pharaoh to take notice of him : and her patronage caused him to be brought up in all the learning of the Egyptians. In short, the early life of Moses was exactly adapted to prepare him for the part which he was afterwards to act.

It has been before remarked, and it may here be observed again, that all the actions of the antient saints, which are recorded, are not recorded to their praise. Some of these may have been good ; others, questionable ; and others, clearly evil — they are mentioned as parts of history ; and we are often left to form our own judgement of their quality. The deed of Moses, of which we here read, namely the act of slaying the Egyptian who was smiting one of his brethren, may properly

perhaps be considered as of the questionable class. Possibly, he might have received some commission or intimation from GOD, which authorised the seeming violence. It is more probable, however, that Moses, who is said to have looked this way and that way to see whether he were observed, was led, through fear of discovery, to go the length of killing the individual; for, if he had smote and not killed him, such was the oppressed state of the children of Israel, that his own life would have answered for the stroke. He seemed to have been led to inflict more than justice, on his own single authority; by the impossibility of obtaining exact justice through the authority of the king. And the story serves, not perhaps so much to mark the general character of Moses, which in after life, at least, was that of meekness, as to exhibit the forlorn condition of the Israelites, who were beaten with impunity by any man who had the advantage of being an Egyptian; and who could only obtain redress, by inflicting a wild and violent revenge secretly for themselves.

How unhappy was the condition of these people! Let us thank GOD that we are not thus left without law to protect us, each man revenging his own or his neighbour's wrong, as the gust of passion leads him. The existence of good government among us, and the mildness of the precepts of the Gospel, form a twofold reason why we should forbear and forgive.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art the Father of the fatherless, and the GOD and Judge of the widow, who lookest down from Heaven, and beholdest all the oppression which is on the earth; and whose ears hear the cry of Thine afflicted people, when they call upon Thee; receive our prayers, we beseech Thee, in behalf of all those, who, in this transitory world, are under any cruel trial. Pour out upon them, O LORD, a spirit of patience and meekness, under their sufferings: and grant unto them faith in those promises of the Gospel, which are sufficient to sustain their souls in adversity, and to carry them, through every affliction.

O LORD, vouchsafe, in Thy good providence, if it please Thee, to lessen the calamities, which either war has kindled, or slavery has spread over the earth. Open a way for the deliverance of all the oppressed, from all their persecutors: and let righteousness at length rule on the earth. Let war and discord cease: let the fury of the oppressor be no more; and let the kingdom of JESUS be established. Thou hast commanded us to pray, that Thy kingdom may come, and Thy will be done, in earth, even as it is in Heaven. Answer, O LORD, at length, this the prayer of Thy people; and let Thy ways be known on earth, Thy saving health among all nations.

We would also pray, O LORD, according to the holy precepts of Thy Gospel, for all our enemies and persecutors. We desire to bless them, who despitefully use us, and persecute us. Turn their hearts, we beseech Thee ; and teach them to consider their ways ; that, having repented of their sins, they may at length find mercy of the LORD, in the Great Day of His righteous judgement.

And O teach every one of us to fear, lest we fall in any measure under the guilt of the cruel man and the oppressor. May we be mild and merciful to those, who, in Thy providence, may be placed under us ; not indulging our wrath, or anger, — our violence, or bitter words ; nor being in any respect unreasonable towards them : but may we remember, that we also have a Master in Heaven, before whom we must stand or fall.

Keep us from every word, or deed, which, being done in haste, we may have to repent of, with long continued sorrow afterwards. And to this end, impress us with a deep and abiding sense of every doctrine of Thy blessed Gospel ; and especially may we often contemplate JESUS CHRIST, patiently enduring to be buffeted, and scourged, and put to death for our sins ; that we, through His stripes, might be healed ; and through His death, might obtain the free gift of life eternal.

And, O LORD, help us to wait with patience for that Day, of which we profess to believe the

near approach; when all, which is dark in Thy dispensations, shall be cleared up; when all, which is crooked, shall be made straight; and when every one shall receive, according to his works, without respect of persons before Thee.

Hear us, we beseech Thee, in these our prayers; and preserve us, through the present day, from every kind of evil.

We ask it in the name, and for the sake, of JESUS CHRIST, our only MEDIATOR and SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXII.

EXODUS, III.

1 *Moses keepeth Jethro's flock.* 2 *God appeareth to him in a burning bush.* 9 *He sendeth him to deliver Israel.* 14 *The name of God.* 15 *His message to Israel.*

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian : and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb.

2 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush : and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed.

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I.

5 And He said, Draw not nigh hither : put

off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground.

6 Moreover He said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

7 ¶ And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

11 ¶ And Moses said unto God, Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

12 And He said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them?

14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this *is* my name for ever, and this *is* my memorial unto all generations.

16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel

together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and *seen* that which is done to you in Egypt :

17 And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

18 And they shall hearken to thy voice : and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us : and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

19 ¶ And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

20 And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof : and after that he will let you go.

21 And I will give this people favour in

the sight of the Egyptians : and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty :

22 But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment : and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters ; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

COMMENTARY.

We have here the first information of the divine appointment of Moses to preside over the Israelites, and to bring them out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage. The angel of the LORD appears in a flame of fire in the bush. Moses is struck with awe ; and his awe is increased by a voice, which says from the midst of the bush, “ Draw not nigh hither ; put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” Let us reverence the purity, as well as the majesty, of God. He still condescends to converse with man — He permits us to draw near to Him in prayer, in adoration, and in praise ; but we should remember, that, when we approach Him, either in public or private worship, we are on holy ground. As Moses “ put off” his “ shoes from off his feet,” so let us lay aside all that defilement

which we contract by our ordinary communications with the world; when we enter into His holy temple, let no profane or worldly thought intrude. When we hear His sacred word, and when we kneel down before Him, let us call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to laud and magnify His holy name.

The LORD, having appeared to Moses, reminds His servant of His own gracious promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is remarkable, that it is GOD who reminds Moses of them — GOD is more ready to give, than we to ask; and is wont to bestow more than either we desire or deserve. With what compassion does the LORD proceed to say, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt; and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters: for I know their sorrows.” Moses, when instructed to bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt, is afraid to go: “Who am I,” says he, “that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel?” He was fearful of Pharaoh, and did not sufficiently trust in the Almighty.

He inquires, who, shall I say, has sent me? “And GOD said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM. And He said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” The words, I AM, are the same as the word JEHOVAH. GOD is the great I AM. In vain do we endeavour to describe His infinite majesty. He is the I AM, the Being of beings. He is that Being who ex-

isted before all things, and gave unto all things their existence — they proceeded from Him ; but He is self-existent. And this I AM both hath been, and is; and will be ; He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Other beings continually change; they are created, they continue for a while, and they turn again to their dust ; but with GOD, there “ is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*.” And “ Thou, Lord,” says the Psalmist, “ in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands : they shall perish, but Thou shalt endure : they all shall wax old, as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt Thou change them ; and they shall be changed : but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail †.”

This GOD is our GOD, if we are children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; for as GOD fulfilled his prediction to them, though they long waited for it, so if we are followers of their faith, He will accomplish his largest promises to us ; and we also shall at last triumphantly say, “ Lo, this is our GOD ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us — this is the LORD ; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation ‡.”

PRAYER.

O THOU great and infinite JEHOVAH, who art the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, who dwellest

* St. James, i. 17.

† Ps. cii. 25, 26, 27.

‡ Isaiah, xxv. 9.

in light inaccessible ; how shall we approach Thee with due reverence ; how shall we purify our thoughts from sin, when we draw nigh to Thy spotless Majesty !

We confess our distance from Thee ; and our unworthiness to appear before Thee ; for we are mean and inconsiderable, poor and helpless, blind and ignorant, defiled also with many sins, and unfit to stand before Thee, O HOLY LORD GOD.

We bless Thee, that, though we have separated ourselves from Thee, Thou hast condescended to come down, and to visit us with the invitations of Thy grace, with the offers of Thy love, with the assurances of Thy pardon, and with all the promises which Thou hast made to us, in CHRIST JESUS. In Him we behold Thy glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the FATHER, full of grace and truth. We pray, O LORD, that, through this Mediator, we may learn to contemplate Thy perfections, without being overwhelmed by them ; and may thus approach Thee daily, through this living way, which is consecrated through His flesh ; and may draw near with full assurance of faith, placing our cheerful hope, as well as confidence, in Thee.

O LORD, we bless Thee, that Thou hast been faithful to Thy promises, which were of old ; and hast delivered Thy people from all their enemies, by a high hand, and an outstretched arm, in Thine own good time, and according to Thine own

righteous purposes ; for Thou art the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob ; this is Thy Name for ever and ever ; and this is Thy memorial for all generations.

We pray, that we may be delivered, by Thy merciful protection, from all our spiritual enemies ; that we may be rescued from the bondage of sin, and from the dominion of Satan ; and may be translated from the power of darkness to the kingdom of Thy dear Son.

Carry us, O LORD, through all the trials which we meet with here. Give us grace to set out, under the banners of CHRIST, our great Leader and Deliverer ; and grant, that, committing our cause to Him, we may never be confounded. Be with us, from day to day, to defend us from the dangers which surround us. Make us to remember, that we are passing through a sinful world, to a land of heavenly rest ; and thus may we be made willing to bear the evils, and to endure the trials, which befall us ; not loving this present world, but looking to that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD.

These our humble and imperfect supplications we offer up in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only Mediator and Intercessor.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXIII.

EXODUS, IV. 1—20.

*1 Moses' rod is turned into a serpent. 6 His hand is leprous.
10 He is loth to be sent. 14 Aaron is appointed to assist
him. 18 Moses departeth from Jethro.*

AND MOSES answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

2 And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

3 And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

5 That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

6 ¶ And the LORD said furthermore unto

him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow.

7 And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.

8 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

9 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*.

10 ¶ And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh

the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?

12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

13 And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of *him whom* Thou wilt send.

14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said, *Is* not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even* he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

17 And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

18 ¶ And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which *are* in Egypt, and see whether

they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

19 And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

COMMENTARY.

WE shall consider first the purposes of GOD, in the miracles which Moses was directed to perform, and then the temper in which he entered on his mission.

GOD is here represented as appearing in a very extraordinary manner to Moses, and empowering him to work the most astonishing miracles; and until he had given this satisfactory proof of his divine commission, the people of Israel seem not to have been expected to believe in it. We may infer hence, that GOD does not require us to believe, without affording suitable evidence. These miracles are intended to shew that Moses acted under an express divine authority. From these miraculous powers, we may also learn how important were the dealings of GOD with the Jewish people; and how signal was to be the event of

their deliverance from Egypt. GOD does nothing in vain. He would not have wrought these great wonders, if a great purpose had not been to be answered by them. The Jews were now about to be formed into a separate Church; the promises of GOD were on the point of being fulfilled; the law was about to be given; the Messiah, to be typified; and a religious worship, to be set up, which was to contain the first elements of that Christian dispensation which was to follow. It was therefore worthy of GOD, to bring forth these children of Israel, with a high hand and an outstretched arm; and to make His glory known, and His name great, among the surrounding heathen. It was fit that He should be seen to be the GOD of heaven and earth, the GOD who ruleth over the elements, and the GOD of all nature, who led them forth. It was fit that the Israelites should be convinced of their being under the Divine protection; and that their Egyptian enemies should be left without excuse.

But let us speak of the temper, which Moses manifested on this occasion. The influence which miracles have on the mind, is nearly the same with that which may be produced by any powerful arguments. We are apt to think that verily we would believe, if GOD would give us the power to work miracles like Moses; or if we, like these children of Israel, could see a miracle. No—if we of this age are disobedient and unbelieving, we should also have been disobedient and unbelieving, if we

had seen a miracle. The proofs of our duty are in many cases as clear, as the proofs of duty afforded to Moses in a miraculous manner. He being instructed by miracles was directed to take the command of the children of Israel. His duty depended on his knowledge of God's will in the matter; and not on the mode by which that knowledge was conveyed to him. We have therefore in Moses a picture of our common nature; we behold a man like ourselves struggling against the Divine instruction to go upon an unpleasant service.

Moses makes a variety of excuses: he begins with his best excuse—he says, “They will not believe me.” We commonly urge our best plea, first; and, when this is answered, we resort to some weaker argument.

His second reason is, “O my LORD, I am not eloquent; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.” How prone are we all to say—we are unfit for the work required of us. There is a pretended humility which is very self-deceiving. Some vice is to be corrected in the world, some Pharaoh to be resisted, some sinner to be exhorted or reproved. “But I am not fit for this service,” is the reply of every one. “I am not eloquent; I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. I know not how to perform properly so great a task.” But God says to Moses, “Who hath made man's mouth? Have not I the Lord? Go, and I will be with thy mouth.” So saith He often to us,

when we make excuses. Go in the name, and in the strength, of the Lord; and try thy powers, feeble as they may be, to rebuke and resist sin; to promote holiness; to relieve the miserable, the neglected, the forsaken; or to save men from the fury of the oppressor. We have all a commission from GOD to do all the good which we can in every possible way: and it is as plain that *we* have *this* charge, as that Moses had a charge to deliver to the Israelites.

Let us then learn, from this passage, to beware of that lowliness of language which is only the cloak of indolence and cowardice and unbelief. Moses, though his objection is answered, remains for a time unconvinced. "O my LORD," saith he, "send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send,"—that is, send whom thou wilt; send any one, but me. This also is our way. When an unpleasant duty is to be done, any one is fitter for it than ourselves; when it cannot be denied that the thing ought to be performed, we say, that *we* are not the persons to perform it.

In the case before us, GOD over-rules all objections, and Moses reluctantly proceeds to the fulfilment of this duty. So we are often driven to that which we ought readily to have undertaken; and it perhaps turns out in our case, as it did in that of Moses, that we are strengthened, and supported, in carrying through the work which we had shrunk from the very idea of beginning.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who didst deliver Thy people Israel from the power of their enemies : — who is a GOD like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ? Thou art worthy to be trusted by all the creatures, whom Thou hast made ; for Thy power is almighty, as of yore, over all : and Thy truth endureth as the hope of all generations.

We desire to put our whole trust in Thee, even in that GOD, who made heaven and earth, and who hath all things under His rule ; who commandeth, and it is done : and whom none can let, or hinder. O LORD, we pray, that, while we adore Thy greatness, and acknowledge Thy power, and profess to believe Thy truth, we may not refuse to obey Thy will. Let not a deceived heart turn us aside : causing us to decline any duty, to which Thou callest us. Thou knowest how exceedingly prone we are to shrink from Thy service ; and to turn aside from our duty : but let us have faith in Thee, not in word, but in deed, and in truth ; walking in Thy ways, and doing what Thou commandest us.

And suffer not, O LORD, that, while we contemplate Thy wonders, which were of old, we should fail to draw the due benefit of them to ourselves ; for they are written for our admonition, also, on whom the ends of the world are come. Give us grace to do all that Thou requirest us to

do—without leaving our duty to others: and give us grace to hear, and to mark, and to apply all that Thou sayest to us by Thy word. And let us not think, that Thou speakest to the men of old, and not unto us, by the reproofs which were given in ancient time to Thy people. May we fear, lest, in any wise, we neglect what it is our duty to learn; and lest, through our folly, or prejudice, or secret selfishness, we put from us at any time, what Thou sayest to us.

O LORD, how often have we wandered in our thoughts, while hearing Thy holy word. How often have we followed our own desires; and trusted to our own fancied wisdom; instead of listening to Thy plain and simple truths. How often have we refused instruction, when set before us: and how often, though GOD hath spoken, have we closed our ears, in carelessness.

Thou speakest to us, O LORD, by Thy Gospel of mercy; by Thy providences; by the events, which daily befall us; by the experience of our own hearts; by the voice, also, of Thy ministers; and, oftentimes, of our very enemies also; as well as by Thy written word: but we have chosen still the fancied light of our own minds: for we have followed our own imaginations; and, instead of obeying Thy good Spirit, which, by these various means, hath said, “This is the way; walk ye in it,”—we have gone, carelessly, and negligently, in our own path.

Make us henceforth, we pray Thee, more humble and diffident, more earnest in searching what the will of the LORD is; and more steadfast in resisting our own wills and imagination. Make us ready, O LORD, to every good work and word. May we go, with willing feet, on every service of danger, to which Thou mayest call us. May we take up our cross, as the followers of our crucified Master: and remembering His example, may we abound in every work of charity, and in every labour of love; helping the miserable, relieving the oppressed, and pleading the cause of the innocent.

And while we attempt to relieve the wrongs of others, O may we be careful, that we act in all things, in our own life, and in our own tempers, as the servants of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; whom He sends forth to do His will, and to promote His cause, in this sinful and evil generation.

On Thee, and on Thy mercies in our SAVIOUR, do we rest, O LORD. Hear our humble petitions, for His sake: and grant us all things, which may be needful for our bodies, and for our souls, to guard us in this world, and to guide us to the world to come, in the name of the same blessed SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXIV.

EXODUS, V.

1 *Pharaoh chideth Moses and Aaron for their message. 5 He increaseth the Israelites' task. 15 He checketh their complaints. 20 They cry out upon Moses and Aaron. 22 Moses complaineth to God.*

AND afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

2 And Pharaoh said, Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

4 And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.

5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now *are* many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

7 Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.

8 And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish *ought* thereof: for they *be* idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go *and* sacrifice to our God.

9 Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.

10 ¶ And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.

11 Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished.

12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.

13 And the taskmasters hastened them, saying, Fulfil your works, *your* daily tasks, as when there was straw.

14 And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, *and* demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to day, as heretofore ?

15 ¶ Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants ?

16 There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick : and, behold, thy servants *are* beaten ; but the fault *is* in thine own people.

17 But he said, Ye *are* idle, *ye are* idle : therefore ye say, Let us go *and* do sacrifice to the LORD.

18 Go therefore now, *and* work ; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.

19 And the officers of the children of Israel did see *that they were* in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish *ought* from your bricks of your daily task.

20 ¶ And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh :

21 And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge ; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.

22 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast Thou *so* evil entreated this people ? Why *is* it *that* Thou hast sent me ?

23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people ; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here a further example of the continually increasing violence and unreasonableness of oppressors. We before read that Pharaoh not only compelled the Israelites to work with rigour ; but that he proceeded also to command the midwives to kill all the male children as soon as they should be born : and that, when through fear of God the midwives disobeyed, he ordered every person in his kingdom to cast into the river all the male children of

Israel which should be born wherever they could be found. The king being now enraged at the Israelites for asking to go up into the wilderness to worship, commands that they shall have no rest from their burdens ; and that they shall receive no straw for making their bricks : and that they, nevertheless, shall be required to furnish the same number of bricks as before. Any one, except Pharaoh, would have seen the unreasonableness of this order ; for it was plain, that they, who had before, by working during the whole day, produced only a certain number of bricks, could not continue to make the same number of bricks, when part of the day should be consumed in looking about for straw. The unreasonableness of this order would have been perceived, if a moment's thought had been given to the subject : but men in a passion never think ; — oppressors never think : they, in their fury, require men, as it were, to make bricks without straw : — they require — not difficulties, but impossibilities, to be conquered ; and when contradicted, they do but rise still higher, both in their passion, and in their demands. They think, that, by insisting on what they had required, they maintain their dignity : and that, by advancing in their demands, they prove their former moderation. Thus, if Pharaoh could have forced the Israelites to deliver the same number of bricks as before, he would have proved himself to have been a very mild taskmaster : but in truth he had never entered

into the case of the poor Israelites ; he had not condescended to examine the subject ; he judged without reflection, and on the mere impulse of passion ; his own will was his law : and right or wrong, possible or impossible, was no part of his consideration.

How different is this character from that of the Christian ! He does unto others, as he would they should do unto him : he carefully puts himself in the place of others ; and makes their case his own : he does not presume to appoint any one to a task, without first reflecting what he should think reasonable in his own case ; for he follows the golden rule given him by his Saviour. He is also much impressed with the sense of his own sins and infirmities ; and is on this account very merciful towards others. How excellent a thing therefore is Christianity in a governor ! He, who is of this mild spirit, is fit to govern others ; whereas violent and hasty men, though very prone to claim power, are sure to abuse it. However they may talk of liberty, they do not fail to become tyrants, as soon as authority is lodged with them.

But let us turn from the consideration of the qualifications of men, to the contemplation of the character of Him who is the King of kings, and the righteous Governor of the whole earth. Some persons conceive of God, somewhat in the way in which the Scriptures speak of Pharaoh ; they look up to Him with the same melancholy and despairing

eye, with which the Israelites looked up to that cruel and inexorable monarch. But GOD is a GOD of mercy. He is “more ready to hear, than we to pray; and is wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve*.” He is represented in Scripture as waiting to be gracious, and as willing that all men should be saved and should come to the knowledge of His truth: — as delighting in mercy; judgement being “His strange work †.” GOD is no tyrant — He is not a hard master — He does not reap where He has not sown, nor gather where He has not strawed: — for it was the wicked and unprofitable servant who, in the parable ‡, dared to represent Him in this light. He rules the world in righteousness, and ministers true judgement unto the people; and He will also hereafter “judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained §.” It is true that He punishes, but He punishes men for their sins, not as Pharaoh did, for his own pleasure. “As I live, saith the LORD GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ||?” So far is GOD from requiring us, in spiritual things, to make, as it were, bricks without straw, that He supplies us with abundant means of grace; and also promises, if we use them,

* Collect: twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

† Isaiah, xxviii. 21.

‡ St. Matt. xxv. 24.

§ Acts, xvii. 31.

|| Ezekiel, xxxiii. 11.

to make them effectual to their end. Depend upon it, we shall be condemned on the Great Day, (if we be condemned) not for having not done what we could not do, but for not having sought, or used, the grace which GOD was willing to afford us.

Let us then rejoice, that we live under this good and righteous Governor of the universe : and that, when we are oppressed, and cast down, through the unreasonableness of men, we can look to this gracious GOD. Let us also contemplate Him as the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as sparing even the punishment which we have deserved ; and let us believe and know that, instead of inflicting, like Pharaoh, cruel and unmerited pain, He is ever willing to receive into the arms of His mercy as many as repent and believe ; and to offer to every soul all needful grace.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art righteous in all Thy ways, and holy in all Thy works, who hatest nothing which Thou hast made, and hast declared, in Thy word, that Thou wilt not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live ; pardon, we beseech Thee, all our hard thoughts of Thee, and all our unwillingness to accept that grace, which is so freely offered to us in Thy Gospel.

We would acknowledge, O LORD, that Thou art more ready to hear, than we to pray ; and art wont to give more, than either we desire or deserve : so that we are without excuse, in turning away from Thee. Thou hast set before us many means of grace. The Bible is in our hands ; but how prone are we to neglect it. Thy word is continually set before us by Thy ministers ; but how often do we turn a deaf ear to it, and harden ourselves in our own iniquity. O LORD, Thou art merciful, and gracious, kind and long-suffering to us : yea, Thy love is over all Thy works ; and Thy compassions fail not, even to the most unthankful of the children of men. We pray Thee to inspire us with worthy thoughts of Thine infinite excellency, and of Thy glorious majesty, that we may trust Thee with holy confidence ; and in simplicity of heart, may commit unto Thee our bodies, and our souls, our cares in this life, and our hopes in heaven.

O GOD, we pray Thee, put an end, through Thy merciful Providence, to the fury of those who rule on earth with a rod of iron ; and who exact what is unreasonable of their fellow-creatures, while Thou art so merciful as well as reasonable to them. Teach all in power to imitate Thy character, who art the Father of all Thy creatures, and art full of compassion towards them. Have mercy on all who are oppressed ; teach them to look up to Thee, as their protector ; and to commit their cause unto Thee, in well doing. O remove the oppression

which is on the earth, by spreading abroad a Christian spirit, among all orders of men ; that each may learn to do unto others, as he would that they should do unto him ; and to forbear, and to forgive, and to be merciful, even as our FATHER, which is in heaven, is merciful.

And especially, may we each of us fix our eyes on JESUS CHRIST, as the great example of compassion, and meekness, and gentleness, and patience ; through whose sufferings, even unto death, we are delivered from the punishments which we have deserved ; and of whose Spirit we must partake on earth, if we hope to reign with Him in His kingdom above.

O LORD, grant us that blessed Spirit, this day, and for ever. Deliver us from angry passions, and from unreasonable words. May we love one another with a pure heart fervently ; and, instead of being severe towards each other, may we bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of CHRIST.

These prayers we offer up in the name of JESUS CHRIST our only SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXV.

EXODUS, VI. 1—13.

God reneweth his promise by his name JEHOVAH.

THEN the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* the LORD:

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of God Almighty*, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

4 And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.

6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I *am* the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgements :

7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God : and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob ; and I will give it you for an heritage : I *am* the LORD.

9 ¶ And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel : but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

11 Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.

12 And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have

not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who *am* of uncircumcised lips?

13 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

COMMENTARY.

WE find, both in Scripture, and in the world, sinners of many classes. The characters, as well as the circumstances, of men are various. We have seen Adam hiding himself from God, in the thick shade of the garden; and in our own day we meet with many sinners who shun God and religion, through the consciousness of the sins which they have been committing. We have read of unbelieving Cain, who through envy killed his brother: and there are not few followers of Cain, who, in the violence of passion, are guilty of murder. The whole multitude in the days of Noah are represented as eating, drinking, planting, building, marrying and giving in marriage: not that they were sinners because they did these things, but because they did nothing else, and thought of nothing else. And thus in our own time no inconsiderable multitude live, only for this world, and

are forgetful of their Maker. The men of Sodom sinned exceedingly before the LORD : and in our own great and luxurious cities, not a few are ruined by pride and fulness of bread, and give themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. We have seen the sons of Jacob inflamed with hatred against their brother, selling him through envy, then uttering a falsehood to their father, in order to conceal their guilt. And in how many do spite and ill-will appear to be the besetting sins ! How many also resort to falsehoods, or to some other crooked means of disguising their guilt, which nevertheless finds them out.

In this, and in the last chapters, we have had before us another character, that of Pharaoh ; he was a violent, headstrong, unmerciful, and despotic king. We read first of his being unreasonably jealous of the children of Israel, and of his ruling them with much rigour. His oppression and cruelty increase ; he requires them to make bricks without straw ; and he commands the murder of all the male children. Next we read of his more direct sins against GOD, and especially of his remarkable hardness of heart and unbelief. GOD, it is said, hardened Pharaoh's heart ; that is, He suffered his heart to become hard, — He withheld from him His grace. GOD may be said to have hardened his heart, in another sense. He sent dispensations of His Providence, which had the effect of increasing the obduracy of Pharaoh. Pharaoh appears to have

experienced no contradiction from his courtiers, and no opposition from his people ; and his pride probably increased through the uncontrolled exercise of his arbitrary power.

Pharaoh became a sinner of a more than ordinary class ; and he is held up to view in Scripture, as a beacon to warn us, lest we should come into the same guilt and condemnation. Behold then this wicked man, before whom every human being who surrounded him was accustomed to tremble ; he commanded, and the thing was done ; no one on earth was greater than he. At the time of which we are now speaking, he invariably had his way. We should tremble at the thought of following our own will ; since we know not to what hardness of heart we may thus be brought — to what total and final obduracy.

Pharaoh, having been used to speak disdainfully of men, proceeded, as we read in the last chapter, to speak disdainfully of God. “ Who is the LORD, that I should let Israel go ? ” But let us not beware only of that extravagant presumption, which characterized this despotic monarch ; the same spirit, in its lower degrees, is to be found in many of the sons of men. The very Israelites, as this chapter tells us, partook of the sin of Pharaoh. Their minds did not yield to evidence. They did not believe Moses, though they saw miracles which here were wrought before them : and their evil heart of unbelief was still more plainly shown in

the wilderness. Even Moses himself had a share of the same spirit ; for how unwilling is he to believe God ! how reluctantly does he go to every duty ! This evil heart then, which dwelt so remarkably in Pharaoh, and so generally in the Israelites, and so plainly even in Moses himself, dwells also in us. Let it be our continual prayer to God, that He will not harden our hearts, but will grant unto us the grace of His Holy Spirit, that we may both repent, and believe.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, without whose gracious help we fall away continually into unbelief and hardness of heart and every sin, we earnestly beseech Thee not to withdraw Thy grace from us ; but to quicken us by Thy Holy Spirit. Forgive, we pray Thee, all our past offences : and, in mercy, leave us not to ourselves : but pardon our guilt, O GOD ; cleanse us from its stain ; create and make in us a new heart ; and renew a right spirit within us.

We confess, that we are all apt to be proud and self-willed : wise in our own eyes, and strong in our own strength ; instead of being teachable, and lowly, and humble, and dependent on Thy grace. We are prone to sin, both against Thee, and against our fellow-creatures ; behaving in a manner often harsh to those whom Thy Provi-

dence hath set under us, and forgetting also Thy government over ourselves. We are apt to follow our own will, as our law ; and to be, each of us, a law to ourselves ; instead of submitting to be taught, and governed, and directed by Thee, who art the righteous Governor of the whole earth ; and all whose commandments are given in truth and equity.

And even, when we have in some measure learnt to know Thy truth, and to hate that bondage of sin, in which we have been held, still how slow of heart are we to believe : how apt to doubt Thy surest promises, and to refuse to follow the plainest precepts of Thy word. How, also, do we deceive ourselves with a false hope, and look round for false comfort, while we are yet continuing in our sins.

Thou seest all our hidden pride, and all the hardness of heart which is in us, while we profess to believe Thy word, and to love Thy law. Thou seest every root of error, which we nourish, and every corrupt temper which favours our self-delusion. These are all, O LORD, known unto Thee ; and Thy grace alone can discover to us the deceitfulness which is in us, and can soften our hearts of stone, and give us a heart of flesh. To Thee, therefore, do we lift up our fervent prayer ; beseeching Thee for Thy Son's sake, to forgive our iniquities ; and to teach us so to profit by the teaching of Thy word, and by all Thy

other means of grace, that we may not pervert the truth to our own destruction. May we be led every day, further from sin ; and may we be encouraged to believe and repent.

Hear us, O LORD, in these, and all our prayers : and pour out upon us a true spirit of supplication, that we may obtain every needful grace, which we ask in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXVI.

EXODUS, VIII.

1 Frogs are sent. 8 Pharaoh sueth to Moses, 12 and Moses by prayer removeth them away. 16 The dust is turned into lice, which the magicians could not do. 20 The swarms of flies. 25 Pharaoh inclineth to let the people go, 32 but yet is hardened.

AND the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

2 And if thou refuse to let *them* go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs :

3 And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs :

4 And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

5 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with

thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.

6 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

7 And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

8 ¶ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.

9 And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, *that* they may remain in the river only?

10 And he said, To morrow. And he said, *Be it* according to thy word: that thou mayest know that *there is* none like unto the LORD our God.

11 And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only.

12 And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.

13 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.

14 And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land stank.

15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

16 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

17 And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

18 And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

19 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh,

This *is* the finger of God : and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them ; as the LORD had said.

20 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh ; lo, he cometh forth to the water ; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

21 Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms *of flies* upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses : and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms *of flies*, and also the ground whereon they *are*.

22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms *of flies* shall be there ; to the end thou mayest know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the earth.

23 And I will put a division between my people and thy people : to morrow shall this sign be.

24 And the LORD did so ; and there came a grievous swarm *of flies* into the house of Pharaoh, and *into* his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt : the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm *of flies*.

25 ¶ And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.

26 And Moses said, It is not meet so to do ; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God : lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us ?

27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.

28 And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness ; only ye shall not go very far away : intreat for me.

29 And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of *flies* may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow : but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.

30 And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

31 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses ; and He removed the swarms

of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people ; there remained not one.

32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

COMMENTARY.

WE perhaps may wonder, as we read this chapter, that Pharaoh should harden his heart against so many judgements. What! did he not even now believe? When he had beheld Moses working miracles before him; when he had seen all the rivers of his kingdom turned into blood; when he found the whole country, not excepting his own bed-chamber, covered with frogs, and then with lice in all quarters; when he had seen swarms of flies plaguing the Egyptians while the land of Goshen was miraculously exempted; still did he not believe? Yes he believed in a certain sense; he believed for the moment; as many a wicked man now believes. He felt the soreness of the judgements which came upon him; and he could not refuse to acknowledge that they proceeded from God, and while groaning under his afflictions, he yielded in smaller points; but even that, which he said and did aright, he said and did with an unwilling and a double heart.—“Go ye,” (said he at the time when the land was corrupted by reason of the flies,) “go ye, sacrifice to your God,” but

sacrifice "*in the land*" — he would not let them go out of the land to sacrifice ; and probably meant to recall his words so soon as the plague should cease — he wished to be delivered at the cheapest possible price.

So it is with other sinners. Some calamity, some sickness, some fear comes upon them. This is the hand of GOD stretched out against them, as it once was against Pharaoh : they groan therefore under the weight of their trouble. Now perhaps they begin to pray—but their prayer is, "O LORD, take away this pain, this terror from me,"—as Pharaoh said, "Intreat the LORD that he may take away the" plague of "frogs;" and, like Pharaoh, they are ready to promise any thing, if they may but be relieved from the present trouble. Prayers and resolutions of this kind, even though attended with a partial obedience, may proceed from one who has a hardened heart. We may be no better than Pharaoh, if this be all the proof of our religion.

It is not enough to pray in the hour of adversity ; or to obey GOD when we are in perturbation through some new and terrible calamity. It is the steady regular service of GOD, which proves a man sincere. It is the prayer for grace, put up in the time of health. It is the holy vow made in the season of worldly comfort and prosperity. It is the obedience which is free and unreserved. It is the heart which is willing to give all that GOD re-

quires; and which is afraid of the least duplicity. These are the marks which distinguish the true penitent, from the false; the heir of Heaven, from the child of Hell; the believing Israelite, from the unbelieving Pharaoh: and the Scriptures mark to us this distinction very plainly. It is a distinction which has existed in every age, and in the Jewish as well as in the Christian Church.

It cannot be unseasonable here to introduce the following observation. There is reason to fear that many a death-bed repentance is only that kind of repentance which hard-hearted Pharaoh displayed. A great proportion of the penitents of this class, who have recovered from the jaws of death, have returned to their former course: they have, like Pharaoh, become the same as before, so soon as the judgements ceased. It is true that a death-bed repentance, if sincere, will be availing. But how often — when such penitents have been rescued from apparently their death-beds — have their pious friends been deceived! This reflection should teach us not to put off our repentance; lest, even if we should seem at last to relent, it should only be the relenting of Pharaoh; and lest, having died in a delusion, we should lift up our eyes in torments. May GOD for CHRIST'S sake grant unto us repentance unto life; and enable us now, while we are in health, to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance*,” to the praise and glory of His Name!

* St. Matt. iii. 8.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, against whom we have too long hardened our hearts, refusing obedience to Thy will, give unto us, we beseech Thee, that repentance which is not to be repented of. Convince us truly of all our sins ; and teach us to hate them with a perfect hatred ; and to turn from every false and crooked way. Give us, we pray Thee, sincerity in Thy sight. Let us not deceive ourselves with any false appearance of goodness ; while our hearts are yet unchanged, and we remain sinners in Thy sight : but be Thou pleased to search, and to try us, by Thy Holy Spirit. Do Thou preserve us from any way of wickedness, whether secret, or open ; and lead us in the paths of righteousness and truth.

We thank Thee, that we are living in so much health and comfort, being surrounded by blessings on every side, though we have deserved to be punished with Thy judgements. We pray, O LORD, that, while this health and strength remain, we may call upon Thee with our whole heart ; and may obtain Thy mercy through JESUS CHRIST. Suffer not that we put off our repentance till the day of trouble ; lest these prayers and professions should be only as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away. And especially make us afraid of continuing to harden

our hearts until the hour of death, lest, in Thy Providence, no warning be given to us; and lest Thou should, suddenly, give us over, to have our portion with the hypocrite, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We would therefore call upon Thee, O LORD, at this time, in humble and earnest prayer, beseeching Thee, as the great GOD of our salvation, to awaken our consciences to a just sense of sin; to put into us all holy desires; and to give us a true determination of soul to live all our days to Thy glory.

May we deny ourselves: resisting our pride, our indolence, our corrupt passions, and affections, and all the evil working of our hearts: and while we pray earnestly, may we also labour diligently to fulfil Thy will, as those who know themselves to be dying creatures, whose souls Thou mayest this night require. Make us to fear a hardened heart above every evil: and to take warning from those who have put off their repentance, of whom we read in Thy holy word. May we remember, that now is the accepted time; and now is the day of salvation: and may we therefore make haste, and delay not to repent of our past sins, and to obey Thee for the time, which may yet be spared to us.

Be with us through this day to preserve us from evil: and give us tender consciences, fearful of sinning against Thee. Grant us faith also to

put our unfeigned trust in Thee, under all circumstances which may befall us. May we see Thine hand in all things, both in Thy judgements, and in Thy mercies; both in those things which happen in the world around us, and in those which befall ourselves: and may all the dispensations of Thy providence be made to work together for our good.

These prayers we most humbly offer up, in the name of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXVII.

EXODUS, IX.

- 1 *The murrain of beasts.* 8 *The plague of boils and blains.*
13 *The message about the hail.* 22 *The plague of hail.*
27 *Pharaoh sueth to Moses,* 35 *but yet is hardened.*

THEN the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

2 For if thou refuse to let *them* go, and wilt hold them still,

3 Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which *is* in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: *there shall be* a very grievous murrain.

4 And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all *that is* the children's of Israel.

5 And the LORD appointed a set time, say-

ing, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land.

6 And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died : but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

8 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

9 And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.

10 And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh ; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven ; and it became a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast.

11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils ; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

12 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them ; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

13 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

14 For I will at this time send all My plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people ; that thou mayest know that *there is* none like Me in all the earth.

15 For now I will stretch out My hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence ; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.

16 And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee My power ; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth.

17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against My people, that thou wilt not let them go ?

18 Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.

19 Send therefore now, *and* gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field ; *for upon* every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.

20 He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses :

21 And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.

22 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven : and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground ; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, was there no hail.

27 ¶ And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD *is* righteous, and I and my people *are* wicked.

28 Intreat the LORD (for *it is* enough) that there be no *more* mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

29 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; *and* the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth *is* the LORD's.

30 But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.

31 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley *was* in the ear, and the flax *was* balled.

32 But the wheat and the rie were not smitten : for they *were* not grown up.

33 And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD : and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

35 And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go ; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here a further description of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and of the controversy of God with him. It might be thought that the judgements, which were before mentioned, would have been sufficient to lay low the loftiest sinner, and to cause the stoutest heart to tremble. But we now read of still more awful visitations of God on this wicked man and his people : and each judgement seems heavier than the former. "Surely" (Pharaoh might say) "there will be no end to these calamities ; while I continue obstinate, they even increase upon me. Not only the waters have been

“poisoned; not only am I visited with a plague of frogs, and of lice, and of flies; but the evil reaches my cattle; the plague of boils breaks out on my very people; and a grievous hail smites every herb which is in the field, so that both man and beast have died.” What an awful state was this! Was it possible that Pharaoh should harden his heart even now;—that he should see the destruction drawing nearer and nearer to his person, and still refuse to repent? A self-will approaching to madness at this time possessed Pharaoh. He showed no soundness of judgement: if he had reasoned as ill concerning the affairs of his family or of his kingdom, as he did in respect to the judgements of God which came upon him, he would probably have been considered by his subjects as void of understanding, and would have been set aside as unfit to govern. This infatuation or madness of Pharaoh was however no other in kind, (though rising higher in degree) than that which commonly possesses sinners; for is it not madness to contend in any case with God, to despise His threatenings, to resist His power, and to refuse to obey His will? and yet does not every sinner do this? Have we not all, more or less, had this madness in our heart?

It is useful to consider sin in its highest degrees; for thus we learn more distinctly to know its nature. Pharaoh began by forgetting God, and by oppressing his subjects: he no longer remem-

bered the mercies formerly shewn to the kingdom of Egypt by the GOD of Israel, who, by the means of his servant Joseph, had nourished and saved the country when it was in danger of being a prey to famine. Casting off the fear of the LORD, he grew headstrong, fierce, and bloody-minded, condemning to death all the male children of the Israelites. Next he entered into open controversy with GOD himself, saying, "I will not let the people go:" while Moses, adding judgement to judgement, again and again, in the name of the ALMIGHTY, urged him to submit. Here then is a striking picture of increasing hardness of heart: and here also, as we shall presently see, is a striking example of the power of GOD in punishing it. "For this cause," saith GOD, "have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth."

Let us reflect on the manner in which a sinner, at this day, generally proceeds.

He begins by forgetting or neglecting GOD, and he follows his natural temper wherever it may lead him; he more and more dislikes, and at length disdains, restraint; and, if raised to power, he tramples his fellow-creatures under his foot; he becomes, like Pharaoh, unreasonable and unmerciful to them; and having been long uncontrolled, he will hear no argument, and bow to no reproof. Now also his unbelief increases; the plainest signs of the Divine displeasure do not convince him; the most

aweful judgements do not alarm him ; or if they move him, it is only for the moment. GOD at length leaves him to himself ; and his obduracy is complete. Such is the progress of wickedness. Let us take a warning from the history of Pharaoh. Let us pray to GOD that He will keep our conscience tender ; and save us from that greatest of all evils, a hard and impenitent heart.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who seest the hardness of our hearts, and whose blessed Spirit alone can convince us of sin, and convert us to the love of holiness, we pray for this Thy best gift, that we may not be left to follow the devices and desires of our own hearts, and to harden ourselves in iniquity.

We pray for tenderness of conscience, and for a mind fearful of grieving Thee, O LORD. Deliver us from doing despite to the Spirit of Thy grace, and from resisting Thy daily calls to repentance ; lest Thine anger should rise up against us : and lest Thou shouldest withdraw Thyself altogether from us, and shouldest visit us with judgement without mercy.

Teach us to fear the awful end of the wicked, and to take warning not only from their final punishment, but also from their increasing hardness of heart and unbelief, which we every day

behold. May we fear, lest, if we sin against the light which we enjoy, our consciences should become seared as with a hot iron; and lest, having trampled under foot the blood of the covenant, there should remain, in our case, no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Pardon, for our Saviour's sake, all our sins in times past. Pardon O LORD, all our forgetfulness of Thee, and our daily trespasses. Pardon all our false repentance, of which the vanity has been proved by our going back into the ways of sin. Pardon our hypocrisy in Thy sight, and all the delusion which we have practised on ourselves; and the self-flattery, which we have indulged in our own hearts. And teach us now to repent of our feigned sorrow; and to bow down before the great and holy LORD our GOD: determining henceforth, through Thy grace assisting us, to obey Thee from our inmost hearts.

And now, O LORD, we beseech Thee, to let the judgement, which we have this day heard, be fixed in our memories, and imprinted deeply in our hearts; that so, we may be deterred from sin, and urged forward in the ways of holiness. May Thy Spirit impress the solemn truths of Scripture upon us; and cause them to work powerfully in all our minds.

May we also remember, that Thou art a mer-

ciful GOD, in the midst of all thy visitations : and that, though Thou punishest sinners for their transgression, yet judgement is Thy strange work ; and that Thou delightest in mercy. May we bow before the sceptre of Thy grace, with a humble, and thankful, and obedient faith ; rejoicing in the mercies of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST : and, approaching Thee in His name, may we become partakers of life everlasting.

We offer up these our prayers, in that blessed name ; and conclude them in His own words :

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXVIII.

EXODUS, X.

1 God threateneth to send locusts. 7 Pharaoh, moved by his servants, inclineth to let the Israelites go. 12 The plague of the locusts. 16 Pharaoh sueth to Moses. 21 The plague of darkness. 24 Pharaoh sueth again unto Moses, 27 but yet is hardened.

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh : for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these My signs before him :

2 And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them ; that ye may know how that I *am* the LORD.

3 And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me? let My people go, that they may serve Me.

4 Else, if thou refuse to let My people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast :

5 And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field:

6 And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.

7 And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?

8 And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: *but who are they that shall go?*

9 And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we *must hold* a feast unto the LORD.

10 And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones : look *to it* ; for evil *is* before you.

11 Not so : go now ye *that are* men, and serve the LORD ; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

12 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, *even* all that the hail hath left.

13 And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all *that* night ; *and* when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt : very grievous *were they* ; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.

15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened ; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left : and there remained not any green thing in

the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

16 ¶ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you.

17 Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only.

18 And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

19 And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

21 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness *which* may be felt.

22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:

23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all

the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

24 ¶ And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.

25 And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God.

26 Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD until we come thither.

27 ¶ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in *that* day thou seest my face thou shalt die.

29 And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.

COMMENTARY.

AGAIN we read of judgement after judgement, pursuing Pharaoh ; and again we find him hardening his heart : the swarms of locusts devour the few fruits of the earth, which the hail had spared ; and Pharaoh, in the same double-minded manner as before, consents, for the moment, to let the people go, but on the condition of their children being left. When the judgement of thick darkness is sent, he allows both them and their children to depart ; but without their flocks and herds.

Sinners ever make some reserve in their obedience ; and this reserve was one mark of the deceitfulness of Pharaoh's heart. Let us ask ourselves, whether we resemble him in this particular. Is our submission to GOD complete ? Do we do the thing which He requires, or merely something like it ? — the whole thing, or only a part of it ? He demands that homage of the heart, which is free and unreserved, not the forced obedience of the hypocrite, which is ever scanty and short.

Some men, being subject to terrors of mind, perform a few occasional acts of religion ; but they do not serve GOD in the general course of their lives. The partiality of their virtue proves it to be false ; and even the thing which they do, proceeding from a wrong principle, is of no value in the estimation of the great Searcher of hearts.

God would not accept the offer of Pharaoh, to let the Israelites go without their children ; nor his offer, afterwards, to let them and their flocks depart together, when his consent was extorted by a merely momentary terror. God did not consider this offer as any offer. Neither will the same God accept our abstinence from any grievous or crying sin, if we still retain the general love of sin in the heart. He will not allow us to be partial in our obedience ; nor to compound with Him for the practice of one iniquity, on the plea that some other iniquity is renounced. God will not accept our sobriety of life, nor our diligence in our calling, nor our civil and friendly manners, nor even our deeds of mercy to the poor, unless a serious principle of piety be added ; or rather, unless this piety be the very source of the whole. Pharaoh seemed to make a liberal concession, when, at a later period, he permitted the cattle to depart ; and we appear to make a large sacrifice, when we conjoin together all the things which have been mentioned. If, however, any one point, which God requires, is deliberately refused, then our heart is hardened, and our whole offering is rejected by God.

It is remarkable, that, at the time when Pharaoh extended the concession, mentioned in this chapter, his heart was peculiarly hardened ; for this was the very period, when he commanded Moses to depart out of his sight ; intimating that he would

put him to death, if he should see his face any more. “And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more.” Moses and Pharaoh agreed. Pharaoh was now given up to his obduracy; and he rejoiced to be let alone. Just thus many a hardened sinner commands some religious friend, some bold and faithful reprovcr, to depart; and rejoices to be delivered from so troublesome a guest: but the deliverance is short. Now GOD’S judgement lingereth not; the sinner’s damnation slumbereth not; he enjoys a momentary calm; but destruction is at the very door.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY LORD our GOD, who callest all men to repentance; who hast long patience with the sinner, yet who wilt at length condemn to an everlasting punishment all who refuse Thy call, and go on hardening their hearts against Thee, we pray Thee to pour out upon us the Spirit of Thy grace, that so we may be enabled to repent, deeply and truly, of all our sins, and to surrender up our whole hearts, and our whole future lives, unto Thee.

Suffer us not to mock Thee by our feigned obedience, and to refuse yielding any part of that sacrifice of our whole souls and bodies, which Thou who art the entire Lord over us, so justly requirest. Pardon, O LORD, for our SAVIOUR’S sake, our many imperfections, and our frequent relapses into va-

rious sins : and at the same time make us steadily determined never to keep back any thing which Thou hast plainly demanded of us. May our time be thine ; and, may our common employments be all followed with a view to Thy glory. May our relative duties be fulfilled for the LORD'S sake. May our substance, and our reputation, our influence in the world, — above us, and around us, and below us, — be devoted to Thee ; and may we give unto Thee the best affections of our hearts ; knowing that it is the heart, and not merely the outward service, which Thou askest of us.

Incline us also to believe all Thy truths ; not choosing that part of Thy sacred word, which we may be able to pervert to our passions and prejudices ; but submitting ourselves to every precept, and to every doctrine. And may we be jealous over ourselves, lest we close our hearts against the smallest portion of Thy truths. May we fear, lest, wilfully hardening ourselves, in one point, we be given up to utter blindness in all : and lest, when, in our careless pride and false confidence, we think, that we are under Thy teaching, we may be found, — as a punishment for our own obstinacy and partial believing, — to have been abandoned to the spirit of delusion.

O LORD, we pray that we may be led into all truth ; and that all holy desires may spring up and abound in us. And may we never separate in our minds the truths of Thy word from that holiness

which Thou hast connected with them. Grant, that we may not be content with that faith which is without works, and which is dead, being alone; but may we shew forth our faith by our works, according to Thy command. And may we to our faith add virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and charity. May every grace of the Spirit abound in us; so that we may not be found barren and unfruitful in any part of the work of the LORD. May we follow the example of our blessed Saviour, who was without sin, though He was tempted in all points like as we are. And resting on His mediation and intercession, may we approach without fear to Thy mercy-seat.

Depart not from us, O LORD, but grant us still the means of grace, and all the helps which we have hitherto enjoyed for our improvement. Grant us tender consciences, and teachable spirits, and minds submissive to every part of Thy sacred word: so that while sinners go on in sin, and while evil men wax worse and worse, and increase unto more ungodliness, we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR, day by day, in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

These prayers we offer up in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XXXIX.

EXODUS, XI.

1 *God's message to the Israelites to borrow jewels of their neighbours.* 4 *Moses threateneth Pharaoh with the death of the first-born.*

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague *more* upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let *you* go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.

2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

3 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses *was* very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

4 And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:

5 And all the first-born in the land of

Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maidservant that *is* behind the mill; and all the first-born of beasts.

6 And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

8 And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

COMMENTARY.

God had now inflicted such terrible judgements on Pharaoh and his people, that we might suppose it impossible that any greater could be added. It is, however, threatened in this chapter, as a further visitation, that every first-born throughout all Egypt should be struck with death; a severity inferior only to that of the destruction of Pharaoh himself and all his host, which soon followed.

And so is it now. God visits some sinners with trouble after trouble; and each affliction is the evident consequence of preceding sin. A man falls, through his vice, into a worse situation than before — he repeats his offence; and his situation in life is now still more unfavourable. Angry at his lot, he betakes himself to some settled course of transgression: — as his sins increase, the divine judgements increase also; and these are to be discerned in that excessive misery which he suffers. Still he hardens his heart, and will not do as God commands, or abstain from what God forbids; he thinks that no misery, no judgement, can be severer than that which he endures; and he says to God, and to the servants of God, as Pharaoh said to Moses, “Get thee from me.”

This is a dreadful state: but let such sinners remember, that there may be conditions still more dreadful. God has still judgements in store for

hardened sinners, even when they think that He has exerted His utmost wrath, and can carry His vengeance no further. Three more punishments of Pharaoh remained to be experienced — there was to be the destruction of the first-born; and then his own destruction in the Red Sea; and last and worst of all, the final destruction of his soul. Let all the impenitent take warning from the example of this unbelieving king; “for this cause,” says God, “have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power.” It is in mercy to us that he is held up in Scripture, as an instance of the divine power in exercising vengeance. Wicked men plunge from crime to crime, and from misery to misery, thinking that each crime, and each misery, will be the last: and after long pursuing this horrible course, they finally make the most terrible plunge of all; still hoping to bring their calamity to an end, they plunge into eternity; they plunge immediately into hell; they run through their fortune, ruin their character and health, and being weary of their existence, they perpetrate that last act to which the devil urges them; they put an end to their own life; and thus leap into that “lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*.”

Let us fear to act in this spirit: let us avoid the approach to this abyss: or if we have unhappily

* Rev. xxi. 8.

taken one or more steps towards it, let us tremble at the horrors which are before us; let us immediately repent, and turn; let us be instant in imploring God to grant us His grace, before we have reached that point at which, when we arrive, we may fear lest we should be given over, like Pharaoh, to blindness and hardness of heart.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who art great, and greatly to be feared, who forgivest them that seek Thy mercy through Thy Son, but who art a God of vengeance to all Thine enemies, and wilt by no means spare the impenitent; we bow down before Thine awful majesty, beseeching Thee to take from us all blindness and hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy word and commandment.

Maintain in us, this day, we beseech Thee, a holy dread of Thy name, and a conscience alive and fearful of sinning against Thee. Keep us mindful of Thy greatness, and of Thy power, and of Thy constant presence with us; that so we may not yield to those temptations which lie in our way, nor indulge those evil thoughts which naturally rise up within us.

Preserve us also, we beseech Thee, from the power of our great adversary, who goeth about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Deliver us from all those temptations, whereby he

assaults our souls ; and save us from all that despair and misery, as well as hardness of heart, which follow from giving ourselves up to his dominion. Rescue us from being his captives ; lest we share in his awful destruction, and have our portion in that everlasting fire which is prepared for him, and for his angels.

Lead us, O LORD, to the utmost distance from sin ; and teach us to pray often and earnestly to Thee, for the help of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may be guarded from all evil, and may be carried through this dangerous world, to the land of everlasting rest.

To this end, instruct us, O LORD, in all Thy truths ; and give us, also, the obedient heart, as well as the understanding spirit. May we listen to the voice of God speaking to us in the Scriptures ; and not turn a deaf ear to Thy word, lest we be cut off for our unteachableness and our unbelief.

And now, O LORD, be merciful unto us this day ; and bless us, by causing Thy grace to rest upon us. May we, all the day long, serve Thee from our inmost hearts, both saying and doing those things, which are pleasing in Thy sight.

We ask every blessing in the name, and through the mediation, of JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XL.

EXODUS, XII.

1 *The beginning of the year is changed.* 3 *The passover is instituted.* 11 *The rite of the passover.* 15 *Unleavened bread.* 29 *The first-born are slain.* 31 *The Israelites are driven out of the land.* 37 *They come to Succoth.* 43 *The ordinance of the passover.*

AND the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

2 This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

3 ¶ Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house:

4 And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a

male of the first year : ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats :

6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month : and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread ; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast *with* fire ; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning ; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

11 ¶ And thus shall ye eat it ; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand ; and ye shall eat it in haste : *it is* the LORD's passover.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and

beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgement: I *am* the LORD.

13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.

14 And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

16 And in the first day *there shall be* an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save *that* which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

17 And ye shall observe *the feast of* unleavened bread; for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of

Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

18 ¶ In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

19 Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

20 Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

21 ¶ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.

22 And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip *it* in the blood that *is* in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that *is* in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

23 For the LORD will pass through to

smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite *you*.

24 And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.

25 And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as He hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

27 That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

28 And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

29 ¶ And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the

captive that *was* in the dungeon ; and all the first-born of cattle.

30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians ; and there was a great cry in Egypt ; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead.

31 ¶ And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, *and* get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel ; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.

32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone ; and bless me also.

33 And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste ; for they said, We *be* all dead *men*.

34 And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.

35 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses ; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment :

36 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them *such things as they required*. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

37 ¶ And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot *that were* men, beside children.

38 And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, *even* very much cattle.

39 And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.

40 ¶ Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, *was* four hundred and thirty years.

41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

42 *It is* a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the

land of Egypt: this *is* that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

43 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This *is* the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:

44 But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

45 A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.

46 In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.

47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

49 One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.

50 Thus did all the children of Israel; as

the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

51 And it came to pass the self-same day, *that* the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

COMMENTARY.

OF all the events recorded in the Old Testament, in connexion with the history of the children of Israel, the most remarkable is that of their departure out of Egypt. As in the New Testament, the life and death of CHRIST, and the deliverance of man from the captivity of sin, and from the power of death and hell, through this great Captain of our salvation, form the capital object; so in the antient Scriptures, the deliverance of the Jews from temporal bondage and destruction, by the means of Moses, is the grand subject of commemoration. The night of their departure, spoken of in this chapter, is, as Moses remarks, “a night much to be observed unto the LORD.” “This,” he says, “is that night of the LORD, to be observed among the children of Israel in their generations.” In order to keep alive the remembrance of this night, the Passover was instituted; which continued to be celebrated until the time of the coming of CHRIST, and in the exact manner here directed. A spotless lamb was killed, in com-

memoration of the lamb whose blood had been sprinkled on the door-posts of the Israelites in order to prevent the destroying angel from coming in: and it was eaten in haste, with their loins girded, (that is, with their clothes girt round, as if they were ready to depart,) with their shoes also on their feet, and with their staves in their hands. Thus was the nation of Jews to be annually reminded of this astonishing deliverance; thus was their gratitude to be again and again excited; and the peculiar goodness of the LORD to be made known from generation to generation.

This temporal salvation of the Jews, recorded in the Old Testament, shadows forth, in a very lively manner, our eternal salvation by CHRIST; and as the Passover was instituted, as the means by which the Jews were to be reminded of the Divine goodness, so the Lord's Supper has been appointed to be to Christians the memorial of God's mercies in CHRIST. It is remarkable, that our SAVIOUR instituted the Lord's Supper, when He was eating the Passover, and eating it, indeed, for the last time. The memorial of the Jewish deliverance ceased, when this greater deliverance was on the point of being accomplished. "CHRIST, our Passover," says the apostle, "is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast:"—And how are we to keep it? "not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the

unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*.” Here then the blood of the paschal lamb is declared to be a type of the atoning blood of CHRIST : and the leaven, so carefully to be put away, is spoken of, as representing the leaven of malice and wickedness ; the bread ordered to be eaten being the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth ; the bitter herbs implied, no doubt, that bitter sorrow for sin, which ought to accompany our repentance and faith in CHRIST : and our celebration of the Lord’s Supper is the subject, to which the thoughts of a Christian are called by this history of the appointment of the Passover.

Let us introduce something here respecting this Christian ordinance. What should we have said of any Israelite, who having been safely brought out of Egypt, should have refused to join in that feast of the Passover, by which he was directed to acknowledge his sense of this astonishing mercy ? And may we not add, what shall we say of that Christian, who, fully professing faith in CHRIST and in his great redemption, fails to attend at the table of the LORD, there to express his gratitude for redeeming love, and his expectation of the second coming of his SAVIOUR ? Men are more sensible of temporal mercies, than of spiritual ; otherwise there would be less want of communicants at the table of CHRIST. Some indeed are fearful of venturing to

* 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

he Lord's Supper. Let such persons learn what is required of communicants — the requisition is, that they shall keep this feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. As many therefore, as sincerely feel their need of being washed by the atoning blood of CHRIST, as many as sincerely pray to be cleansed from all their sins by CHRIST'S Holy Spirit, — let every one of these, although still sinful and imperfect, although weak also in faith, remember that he is invited to commemorate that body, which has been broken, and that blood, which has been shed for him. May we all be careful to bring this spirit of sincerity and truth to the table of the LORD, whensoever we approach it; and may we rejoice in those higher promises, and that richer grace, and that abundant fulfilment of types and ceremonies, which characterize the dispensation of Christianity.

PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY FATHER, who hast given Thine only SON JESUS CHRIST, the Paschal LAMB of GOD, to be the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may all be among the number of Thy chosen people, whose guilt is taken away by the sprinkling of His precious blood. May no destroying angel be commissioned to hurt us: but, when the day of Thy vengeance comes, may we be passed by, as those who are marked with the sign of Thy covenant.

O LORD, grant us now, we beseech Thee, an unfeigned faith in CHRIST, and a trust in His all-sufficient atonement; and may we draw near unto Thee, in daily prayer, imploring an interest in His death, and feeling bitter grief and sorrow for our offences.

We pray Thee also, that we may be affected with a sense of Thy redeeming mercy; and that we may be made desirous of commemorating the death of CHRIST, and may shew forth our gratitude by often speaking of this Thy mercy, and by giving up our whole lives to Thy service.

We pray also for purity and sincerity of heart. Grant that we may never join any secret longing after forbidden things, with our holy Christian profession; and, especially, may we put away all anger and malice, as well as deceitfulness and guilt. Grant that we may not be of the number of those, who dishonour the name of CHRIST by sinful passions, by wrath and strife, or by bitter words; but may we amend our lives, and put away all the evil of our doings, and live in charity one with another.

We pray also for increasing knowledge in all Thy will and ways:—that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened to discern truth and error, and good and evil; and may we profit also, by all the various and multiplied instructions of Thy sacred word. May no false doctrine dwell among us; may no hardness of heart be found in us; may no unteachableness, or indifference to

the truths set before us, provoke Thee to withdraw Thy grace from us. May we repent of all which we have done amiss in time past; may we grow in grace; and may our love abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement. May we approve things which are excellent; and may we be sincere and without offence till the day of CHRIST.

We present these our humble and imperfect supplications, in the name of JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLI.

EXODUS, XIII.

1 *The first-born are sanctified to God.* 3 *The memorial of the passover is commanded.* 11 *The firstlings of beasts are set apart.* 17 *The Israelites go out of Egypt, and carry Joseph's bones with them.* 20 *They come to Etham.* 21 *God guideth them by a pillar of a cloud, and a pillar of fire.*

AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it is Mine.

3 ¶ And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this *place*: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

4 This day came ye out in the month Abib.

5 ¶ And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the

Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.

6 Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day *shall be* a feast to the LORD.

7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

8 ¶ And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, *This is done* because of that *which* the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.

9 And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.

10 Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.

11 ¶ And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as He sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee,

12 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD

all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast ; the males *shall be* the LORD's.

13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb ; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck : and all the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.

14 ¶ And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *is* this ? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage :

15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beast : therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males ; but all the first-born of my children I redeem.

16 And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes : for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.

17 ¶ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philis-

tines, although that *was* near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.

18 But God led the people about, *through* the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

20 ¶ And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.

21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, *from* before the people.

COMMENTARY.

HERE another institution is added, in order to keep alive in the minds of the Israelites the circumstances of their escape out of Egypt—every first-born both of men and cattle is ordered to be presented to the LORD, in token that the preservation of their lives was to be ascribed to the LORD's sparing them, when He slew all the first-born of the Egyptians.

It is a chief design of Scripture to remind men of their obligations to GOD: and the mode used to impress them with a sense of His goodness, varies according to the circumstances of different persons. Some men have been favoured in one respect; and some, in another. Some, who have been extremely wicked, have experienced much of the divine forbearance. This was the case of Pharaoh. Some have, like Moses, been wonderfully favoured in their youth. Some, like both Moses and Aaron, have been raised to unexpected and unmerited honour. Some, like the multitude of the Jews, have been favoured with a signal and national preservation, which they ought thankfully to commemorate; and some, like the first-born of the Israelites, have had a double deliverance: they have escaped both from the Egyptian enemy, and from the destroying Angel; and they ought, there-

fore, to shew double gratitude in return. They ought in a very peculiar manner to dedicate the lives which have been spared, and the souls which have been saved, to Him who has been their Redeemer. Some of us, if we would look back over our past history, might perhaps be able to trace, in like manner, mercy upon mercy; we might discover more than one turning point in our lives; which, like these signal deliverances of the first-born of the Israelites, might be well worthy of our special and yearly recollection, commemoration, and thanksgiving.

How great does the goodness of GOD continue to be towards his people Israel, and how tender is His care over them! “And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that GOD led them not through the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for GOD said, Lest peradventure the people, when they see war, return to Egypt. But GOD led the people about through the way of the Red Sea.” A peevish and discontented Israelite would probably have misconstrued this mercy. He would exclaim—“But why may we not go by the straight road to Canaan? Surely, this is not the way to the promised land which is flowing with milk and honey!” Thus as Jacob and his sons reluctantly consented to go down to Egypt, when Joseph was there; so many doubtless of the posterity of Jacob moved heavily along the circuitous path, which was to lead them up from Egypt;

though if they had been directed to take the straighter road, they would not have gone forward at all.

So it is with us. GOD proportions our strength to our day; He exposes us to a small trial, in order that we may avoid a greater: and, then, we complain of the light burden, as if it were too heavy to be borne. Even faithful Christians wish to go, as it were, by the short road, to Canaan, and not to be led about by the way of the wilderness. They feign to themselves an easier and nearer path to the promised land, than that through which they are conducted by Divine Providence;—a path in which there will be no weariness to be endured, and no obstacle to be surmounted, no barren land to be traversed, and no Philistines to interrupt their march; while He, who knoweth our frame, and discerneth the surrounding danger, chooses more wisely for us, than we for ourselves. It becomes us therefore to advance with willing feet, through whatever scene our lot is cast, towards that “rest which remaineth to the people of GOD*.”

“The LORD,” it is said, “went before them by day, in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night, in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.” How great, it may be again remarked, were the mercies of GOD towards this people! By day, the cloud guided them, and

* Heb. iv. 9.

also defended them from the sultry heat ; and the fire directed them in their unknown path, by night. We must not expect the same signal favours, or equally clear manifestations of the way which we ought to take ; let us however thank God, for the unerring rule of Scripture ; let us also pray, that He who is Himself the way, the truth, and the life, will guide us by His Holy Spirit ; so that at the Great Day it may appear, that we have not followed the broad road which leadeth to destruction, but that He hath conducted us by the narrow path which leadeth to everlasting life.

PRAYER.

O God, who governest in tender love the world which Thou hast made by Almighty wisdom, and who hast ordained to each of us the station and the circumstances of our existence, enable us to feel and to acknowledge Thy long-suffering goodness, which, in the midst of all our provocations, hath continued to us so many blessings of this life, and hath still committed to us the knowledge of Thy will in Thy Holy Book, and hath given to us, through the Saviour whom it reveals to us, the hope of everlasting happiness in the world to come.

We thank Thee, that Thou hast brought us together again in health and safety to the morning of

another day. We beseech Thee to abide with us continually; and to lead us ever in the way in which we ought to walk. O LORD ALMIGHTY, whatever may be the condition which Thy Providence may appoint for us in this world, we beseech Thee ever to grant us grace in proportion to our need. Be with us always to give us light in our darkness, and strength in our weakness:—and be to us our refuge in danger, and our very present help in trouble. Grant, that we may never distrust Thy gracious Providence; but may cheerfully and gratefully follow the path which Thou shalt point out to us, watching, with humble dependence, all the indications of Thy blessed will; and prepared, by Thy grace, to resign every worldly and fleshly inclination which may rise up against our duty. Enlighten us habitually by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may see and tread the narrow way which leadeth to everlasting life;—looking neither to the right hand nor to the left,—to the pleasures of sin which are but for a season, or to the terrors by which evil spirits may endeavour to assail our souls; but, whether in prosperity or in adversity, in earthly joy or in earthly sorrow, pressing forwards with willing feet to the heavenly Canaan, which Thou hast prepared for them who love Thee—to that eternal rest, which remaineth to the people of God.

Every spiritual and every temporal blessing which we ask for ourselves, we desire, O GOD, to

ask for all others, whom it is our duty to remember in our prayers:—for the absent members of our family; for all our friends; for the Queen and all the Royal Family; for her counsellors, and all in authority under her; and for the whole Church of Christ, particularly for that pure and reformed branch of it established in our own favoured country.

We ask all in the name of the LORD JESUS; and in His holy word, close our own imperfect prayer:

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLII.

EXODUS, XIV.

1 God instructeth the Israelites in their journey. 5 Pharaoh pursueth after them. 10 The Israelites murmur. 13 Moses comforteth them. 15 God instructeth Moses. 19 The cloud removeth behind the camp. 21 The Israelites pass through the Red Sea, 23 which drowneth the Egyptians.

AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.

3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They *are* entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I *am* the LORD. And they did so.

5 ¶ And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against

the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us ?

6 And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him :

7 And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel : and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

9 But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

10 ¶ And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them ; and they were sore afraid : and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

11 And they said unto Moses, Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness ? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt ?

12 *Is* not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For *it had been* better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

13 ¶ And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will shew you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:

16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea.

17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get Me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

18 And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have gotten Me honour

upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

19 ¶ And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them :

20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness *to them*, but it gave light by night *to these* : so that the one came not near the other all the night.

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground* : and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

23 ¶ And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, *even* all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

24 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked into the host of

the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.

25 And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

26 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry *land* in the midst of the sea; and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians ; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

31 And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians : and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

COMMENTARY.

WE come now to the destruction of Pharaoh. He enjoyed a short respite immediately before his death : and during this period, his anger, as well as pride of heart, were again conspicuous ; but how suddenly did all his thoughts perish !

Pharaoh, as was observed before, had many misgivings of mind ; he seems even sometimes to repent. Let no one trust to such occasional relentings as this ; to the recollection of some temporary fright, on account of sin ; or to having talked the language of repentance, when under the pressure of some heavy infirmity. All this may subsist together with hardness of heart. Pharaoh was now given over to his own wickedness, and to the power of the Devil. He therefore pursues his destruction, as directly as if it were his plan to be his own executioner : and this is the course, which hardened sinners are often found to take. One might imagine, that they loved death and chose damnation ;

for they court them by every part of their conduct: they see the hand of God visibly against them; they derive no benefit from their rebellion; yet they persist, until wrath comes upon them to the uttermost. O may we dread this last stage of sin, this state of infatuation and madness; this casting off of fear, this complete obduracy of heart!

Pharaoh now repents of his repenting. "Why," says he, "have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" He makes ready his chariot, and takes his people with him. He imagines that the Israelites are entangled in the land; that they are shut in between the Red Sea and the wilderness; and that this is the moment for falling upon them. A small temptation is sufficient to inflame the mind already bent on wickedness. Those Providences of God, which, rightly understood, make against the wicked, are construed by them as encouragements, and are the means of tempting them to their ruin. The plagues, which had so grievously afflicted Pharaoh, when he was in Egypt, were probably now forgotten. That evil had passed away; no present trouble pressed upon him; and he would presume, that no other plagues were in store.

Sinners often judge in this erroneous manner. When God ceases from punishing in one way, we forget that He can punish in another. Pharaoh is now delivered from the plagues of Egypt; but he is drawing near to the Red Sea, which is finally to

swallow up both him and his host. Now also he is under the full power of unbelief; and he feels neither pain nor fear, as he approaches to the moment of his destruction. This is a most awful part of the history of Pharaoh; may we dread a false confidence as the greatest evil.

But how weak in faith, or rather how unbelieving, were now the children of Israel! As Pharaoh forgot all the plagues of Egypt, so they let slip from their minds their former miraculous deliverances, and began to complain against Moses, and against the LORD. We expect, that, when we turn to the children of Israel, we shall find in them a thankful and obedient spirit. Weary of the crimes of Pharaoh and his Egyptian host, we seek relief by looking to this people of GOD; and expect a history to begin, which shall form a contrast to the melancholy tale recently recited. The sufferings of the Israelites will, as we trust, have softened them. So many miracles will have confirmed their faith; and so many mercies and deliverances will have rendered them a very thankful people. †

How contrary to this did the event prove! We are now entering on a narrative, which will consist of little else than an account of their murmuring and unbelief; and we have here the first example of it. They said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?” How little thanks do

sometimes the best men obtain, for their kindness to the miserable ! The very sons and daughters of affliction, when redeemed from bondage, turn against their deliverers, and complain of them as if they had been of the number of their oppressors. Such is human nature ; such is the ingratitude of the human heart ! Let him who, like Moses, is about to do some great good to his oppressed fellow-creatures, prepare himself, by all the patience and meekness of Moses, for the affronts which he may expect to experience.

GOD in this case works a great miracle. An east wind is made to blow upon the waters at so critical a time, and in so extraordinary a manner, that a passage is made for the Israelites across the bed of the sea : and, before Pharaoh's unbelieving host can overtake them, all the chariots and horsemen of the Egyptians, and all the multitude of their host, are drowned ; and the Israelites see them dead on the sea shore.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art terrible in judgement, doing wonders, give us grace to bow down with awe and reverence before Thy divine majesty, as often as we appear before Thee. We acknowledge Thee to be righteous in all Thy ways, and holy in all Thy works ; who, though Thou

long sparest the guilty, yet wilt not finally save the hardened and unrepenting sinner.

We adore Thee, O LORD, in the midst of all Thy dispensations of judgement and of mercy; before which, vain is all the pride, and pomp, and self-confidence of man. We desire to renounce all trust in ourselves, and to tremble at the thought of hardening our hearts against Thee. Deliver us, we pray Thee, from the sin of unbelief, and from all hope of prospering while Thy face is against us; lest, in that false hope, we perish with an aggravated ruin.

Keep us, O LORD, dependent on Thee, humble, watchful, and obedient; often lifting up our hearts to Thee, for wisdom to direct us, and for grace to sanctify us, and to guard us from every sin.

O LORD, we pray for a contented as well as a believing mind; so that we may never complain when we are brought into any difficulty, or pain, or trouble; but may be willing to stand still, and see the salvation of GOD. May we keep in Thine appointed path; doing what Thou commandest, and satisfied with Thy watchful and fatherly care over us; knowing, that, if we trust in Thee, and are found walking in the way of an obedient faith, even those things, which seem to us the greatest hindrances, or the sorest evils, shall be to our advantage, and our most signal good.

And while we contemplate, O LORD, Thy judgements on the earth, whereby Thy wrath hath been

often manifested, against the guilty, in this world ; we would also lift up our thoughts to that last Great Day, when no sinner shall be able to stand before the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven ; and when every eye shall see Him, and all nations of the earth shall wail because of Him. O deliver us from that flood, which shall hereafter come upon the whole world of the ungodly ; and save us, O LORD, by Thy great salvation, from the power of all our enemies, and from that lake, which burneth with fire, which is the second death. May we, therefore, now stand in awe, and sin not. May we call upon Thee, in this day of Thy grace and mercy ; and may our prayers be heard and answered through JESUS CHRIST.

We now beseech Thee to keep us in all our ways. May the truth, which we hear, abide in us ; and cause us to depart from evil ; and thus living in Thy fear, and doing Thy will continually, may we at length, through the mercy of our blessed Deliverer and Redeemer, be received into Thy kingdom, and admitted to sing Thy praise for ever.

These our imperfect prayers we humbly offer up, in the name of JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLIII.

EXODUS, XV.

1 *Moses' song.* 22 *The people want water.* 23 *The waters at Marah are bitter.* 25 *A tree sweeteneth them.* 27 *At Elim are twelve wells, and seventy palm trees.*

THEN sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD *is* my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He *is* my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation: my father's God, and I will exalt Him.

3 The LORD *is* a man of war: the LORD *is* His name.

4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

5 The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.

6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is become

glorious in power: Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

7 And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee: Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, *which* consumed them as stubble.

8 And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, *and* the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

10 Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

11 Who *is* like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

13 Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people *which* Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided *them* in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.

14 The people shall hear, *and* be afraid:

sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed ; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them ; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them ; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be *as* still as a stone ; till Thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, *which* Thou hast purchased.

17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, *in* the place, O LORD, *which* Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, *in* the Sanctuary, O LORD, *which* Thy hands have established.

18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them ; but the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea.

20 ¶ And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand ; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

23 ¶ And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.

24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them,

26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought

upon the Egyptians: for I *am* the LORD that healeth thee.

27 ¶ And they came to Elim, where *were* twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

FAMILY COMMENTARY.

THE Song of Moses was set no doubt to music, and sung with great exultation by the children of Israel. It is a song of victory, but of a victory ascribed to God, and to Him alone. All victory should be referred to God; for though in Pharaoh's destruction the arm of God was peculiarly and miraculously evident, yet is it stretched out still in every national triumph which we may gain, and in every deliverance which we may experience. The enemy may say, — I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; — but the LORD, by blowing with His wind, can make the sea to cover them; or He can cause the earth to swallow them up: — for Thy right hand is glorious in power; Thy right hand, O LORD, dasheth in pieces the enemy.

The Israelites, though they had felt a glow of joy and thankfulness while they were celebrating this miraculous deliverance, began again to murmur against Moses, and against the LORD, at the waters

of Marah. After only three days farther journey, their unbelief and ingratitude return. How awful is this circumstance! Let us not trust to a momentary feeling of devotion on occasion of some signal mercy. Perhaps in three more days we may return to our sins, and provoke the wrath of our deliverer.

But let us turn from the subject of this mercy, which was temporal, to our salvation, by CHRIST, which is eternal. Great was the miracle wrought in favour of the children of Israel at the Red Sea; and most extraordinary were all the means employed for their escape out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. But how much more wonderful are those means which GOD has provided for our rescue from a state of spiritual thralldom, and for our arrival at the promised land of rest. CHRIST, the only begotten SON of GOD, has come down from heaven to become the Captain of our salvation; and He has been declared to be the SON of GOD with power, by signs and miracles without number. How great also is the comparative misery from which we are rescued! They were saved from Egyptian taskmasters only; we, from the world, the flesh, and the Devil. How elevated are our hopes in comparison of theirs! They turned their eyes to a land flowing with milk and honey, which was, indeed, the glory of all lands; but it was a short-lived earthly possession. We look to a dwelling-place in heaven, to a city

which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD, — to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

If, then, we have reason to hope that we are sharers in the blessings procured by the victory of the SON of GOD, let us, like these Israelites, shout for joy, and exalt the praises of our Redeemer. We may employ their words, but in a sense that is far more spiritual. “Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? — Thou, in Thy mercy, hast led forth Thy people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.” Oh! may we borrow that language in the Revelations, which is there said to be the language of those who sung “the song of Moses the servant of GOD, and the song of the Lamb, — saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints*.”

* Rev. xv. 3.

PRAYER.

BLESSED LORD, who hast caused the Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant us grace to draw from them the lessons which our souls require.

Enlighten us to see that Thou governest the world by Thine unceasing Providence ; that Thou puttest up, and pullest down ; and that, while it is Thou, who givest victory to Kings, it is Thou, also, who directest the minutest events in the life of the humblest of Thy servants, and who causet all things to work together for good to them who love Thee. Grant us grace, then, while we recognise Thy fatherly hand in every event,—whether drawing us to Thee by chastisements, or drawing us to Thee by mercies,—to love Thee above all things ; and, in the habitual frame of our minds, to feel and know that we are Thy children.

ALMIGHTY FATHER, grant us grace, also, to acknowledge the spiritual blessings of our condition. Thou hast opened to us all the gate of salvation : Thou hast invited us all to come forth from the bondage of sin and of Satan ; and hast placed before us all a heavenly rest. And where our treacherous hearts have murmured, or have rebelled, or have turned back from Thee, Thou hast again and again warned us of our folly and our guilt ; and, again and again, hast stretched forth Thine hand to save

us from the world, the flesh, and the Devil ; and to bring us back to Thee.

May Thy mercies in providence and in grace be ever in our minds : may the contemplation of those mercies rouse us to repentance and to love : may we dread every approach to sin, as being the thing which Thou hatest ; and may our souls be daily renewed and sanctified by the influences of Thy Blessed Spirit ; and our bodies refreshed by needful food and rest, and guarded from the secret as well as the open evils, which—except The Lord be with us—would daily hazard our comforts or our lives.

These mercies we unite in imploring for the sake of JESUS CHRIST.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLIV.

EXODUS, XVI.

1 The Israelites come to Sin. 2 They murmur for want of bread. 4 God promiseth them bread from heaven. 11 Quails are sent, 14 and manna. 16 The ordering of manna. 25 It was not to be found on the sabbath. 32 An omer of it is preserved.

AND they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin, which *is* between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness :

3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, *and* when we did eat bread to the full ; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

4 ¶ Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you ; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no.

5 And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare *that* which they bring in ; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

6 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt :

7 And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD ; for that He heareth your murmurings against the LORD : and what *are* we, that ye murmur against us ?

8 And Moses said, *This shall be*, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full ; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him : and what *are* we ? your murmurings *are* not against us, but against the LORD.

9 ¶ And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of

Israel, Come near before the LORD : for He hath heard your murmurings.

10 And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

11 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel : Speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread ; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God.

13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp : and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness *there lay* a small round thing, *as* small as the hoar frost on the ground.

15 And when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said one to another, *It is* manna : for they wist not what it *was*. And Moses said unto them, *This is* the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

16 ¶ This *is* the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, *according to* the number of your persons; take ye every man for *them* which *are* in his tents.

17 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

18 And when they did mete *it* with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

19 And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

20 Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

21 And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

22 ¶ And it came to pass, *that* on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one *man*: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

23 And he said unto them, This *is that*

which the LORD hath said, To morrow *is* the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD : bake *that* which ye will bake *to day*, and see the that ye will see the ; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

24 And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade : and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

25 And Moses said, Eat that to day ; for to day *is* a sabbath unto the LORD : to day ye shall not find it in the field.

26 Six days ye shall gather it ; but on the seventh day, *which is* the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

27 ¶ And it came to pass, *that* there went out *some* of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

28 And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws ?

29 See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days ; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it *was* like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it *was* like wafers *made* with honey.

32 ¶ And Moses said, This *is* the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.

33 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.

34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

35 And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

36 Now an omer *is* the tenth *part* of an ephah.

COMMENTARY.

“YOUR murmurings,” says Moses in this place, “are not against us, but against the LORD :” and the same thing may be said of all human complaints ; for though man may be the instrument which inflicts the sufferings, and we are ready therefore to vent our rage against man, yet it is GOD who appoints every trial which we experience ; so that all our murmurings against man are murmurings against GOD also. A repining spirit proceeds from want of faith. The children of Israel would not believe that GOD would finally deliver His people ; and therefore, on the occasion of every new difficulty and danger, they renewed their complaint. They occasionally shewed some religious affections,—they sung the song of which we read in the preceding chapter : “Sing unto the LORD,” said they, “for He hath triumphed gloriously*.” They thought, at that moment, that their mountain stood so fast that it would never be moved : but their religion was unstable ; it consisted in praising that GOD on one day, of whom they complained on another. If we judge of them by the height of their religious joy, on the evening of that day on which they crossed the Red Sea, we shall say, These are the people of GOD ; surely,

* Exodus, xv. 1.

these are they who honour the LORD ; and whom the LORD delighteth to honour :—but if we form our opinion of them by what is said in this and many following chapters, we shall then be constrained to pronounce them a most unthankful and disobedient, as well as a most unbelieving people.

It pleased GOD to protect these Israelites, in a remarkable manner, during all their passage through the wilderness. We have been informed already of the cloud which attended them by day, and of the pillar of fire by night. We now read also of their having daily food sent miraculously from heaven. How wonderful is it that any of them should not believe ; and how offensive to GOD must have been their distrust, after so many merciful interferences. If one man exercise kindness towards another, if he be constant in his beneficence, and large and liberal in his favours, the withholding of that confidence, for which so strong a claim has been established, is commonly deemed provoking and inexcusable. If a child, for instance, should be so distrustful of his father as not to believe his promise to provide for him even for the next hour, — of a father who never had deceived him, who had amply fulfilled every assurance which he had ever given him, and had watched over him with the most tender solicitude even from his infancy, how affronting to the father would such conduct be deemed. The father doubtless would say, “ Is this my son still distrustful of me ? is he

still suspicious that I am either unable or unwilling to take care of him? does he still murmur at the measures which I take in order to serve him, and which he would perceive, if he would wait a moment, to have been designed entirely for his good? Does he persist in affirming that every thing, which I do for him, is wrong; although all, which I have hitherto done, has eminently contributed to his benefit?" Now this was exactly the temper of these Israelites: GOD wrought for them a great deliverance out of Egypt. He sent to them the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night; but they declared, that He had not delivered them at all, and that they should perish in the wilderness. He then gave them manna from heaven; and He promised that He would send day by day fresh manna to feed them. Yet many would not trust Him till the succeeding morning, and began to lay up for themselves a store for the succeeding days: but the manna, thus irreligiously hoarded, bred worms, and could not be eaten. GOD commanded them to gather a double quantity of manna on the sixth day, in order that they might rest on the sabbath: but so perverse were many of the same Israelites, that they went forth on the sabbath as on other days, to gather manna, not believing the word of Moses, but they found none. Well might the LORD say unto Moses, "How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?"

Let us learn from this chapter to beware of un-

belief. Unbelief withholds from GOD that honour which is due to Him ; while faith disposes us to pay to Him both deference and obedience. Let us learn also to avoid a complaining spirit ; let it not satisfy us, that we have felt some short-lived emotions of religious joy, like the children of Israel at the Red Sea ; but rather let us inquire what is our ordinary temper and spirit. Are we habitually contented and thankful ? Do we acknowledge the mercifulness of the divine dealings with us in times past, and do we trust our Divine Benefactor for the time to come ? Do we depend on His bounty for the nourishment of our bodies, and on His grace for the support of our souls ? Do we also keep the sabbath from polluting it, esteeming it to be not a day of common work, but a day holy to the LORD ? And, finally, as Aaron laid up a pot of manna to be kept, even to future generations, as a testimony of GOD's goodness, do we treasure up in our minds the remembrance of our Redeemer's mercy ? Do we speak of it to our children who are come after us, that they also may " set their hope in GOD, and not forget the works of GOD ; but keep His commandments ? "

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, we acknowledge Thy power and Thy greatness, and all Thy past undeserved mercies toward us. We have been maintained by Thy bounty, led by Thy Providence, and guarded by Thy care, day after day ; we have been delivered from many dangers ; we have been carried through many trials, and difficulties, and temptations ; and we have often had reason to see Thy hand directing our affairs ; yet how little, O LORD, do we even now trust Thee, for the time to come ; how little do we obey Thy will ; and serve Thee, with an humble, penitent, and obedient heart.

O pardon our ingratitude and forgetfulness of Thee, and our many backslidings from Thee. Teach us to trust Thee at all seasons ; and not to murmur against Thee. Teach us also to love Thee above all things ; not wishing to turn back into the paths of sin, or forsaking the LORD who hath been our deliverer. O keep us ever mindful of Thee ; and help us, merciful GOD, to pursue our course, walking in Thy holy laws, depending on Thy daily help, and reverencing all Thy statutes and commandments.

Preserve us, O LORD, we beseech Thee, on this day, from every evil : keep our minds stayed on Thee ; and deliver us from a hardened heart, and from a worldly unbelieving spirit. May we be

indeed of the number of Thy faithful people, whose steady purpose it is to obey Thee ; hearkening unto the voice of Thy word, and subduing all evil passions and inclinations, which naturally rise up within us.

We pray Thee, O GOD, to make us thankful for our lot. May we be so deeply humbled for our sins, that we may account the smallest of Thy mercies to be more than we deserve : and may we, in this spirit, and conscious of our utter unworthiness, praise Thee, with our whole hearts, for the least, as for the highest, of Thy bounties, for our food and raiment, and all Thy temporal gifts, as well as for the means of grace, and the hope of glory. May we be ashamed of all our repining and complaints ; and may we be of a cheerful, as well as of a grateful, spirit ; exercising all kind and obliging tempers to those, whom Thy Providence hath set above us, or round us, or under us ; being mindful of our own favoured lot in life, and of all Thine abundant mercies, to our bodies, and to our souls.

Hear, O LORD, these our prayers ; and, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, pardon the imperfection of them ; and, for His sake, grant us all that we need.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLV.

EXODUS, XVII. 1—7.

1 *The people murmur for water at Rephidim. 5 God sendeth him for water to the rock in Horeb.*

AND all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and *there was* no water for the people to drink.

2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore *is* this *that* thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

4 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

COMMENTARY.

AGAIN we read of the murmuring of the children of Israel. Occasions of murmuring will often return to those who are of a murmuring spirit. Indeed, GOD may sometimes bring the complaining person into distress, for the punishment of his sin. Thus in the case of which we are now reading, GOD caused the Israelites to suffer through want of water: thus perhaps punishing them for their former discontent, and making fresh trials of their

temper; though certainly intending to shew forth His Divine power in their deliverance. Moses smites the rock, and the waters flow. Thus another ground of confidence in God is given; and another miracle of mercy is wrought in favour of the Israelites.

We must here notice a spiritual meaning which the apostle Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians *, gives to this event. And they drank, says St. Paul, “of that spiritual Rock which followed them;” and he adds, “that rock was CHRIST;” that is, a type or representation of CHRIST; for as refreshing streams flowed from this rock, for the bodily relief of the Israelites; so refreshing streams of divine grace proceed from CHRIST the great fountain of grace, for the spiritual support of His people. We are naturally faint and without health and strength; but we derive from CHRIST that living water which is able to renew the soul. It is said of this rock that it followed the Israelites, that is, the streams flowing from it accompanied them in their course; and thus they were delivered from thirst, not only when the rock was first struck, but during their farther journey. Those helps and consolations of the Divine Spirit, which we derive from the great Author of all grace, may also be considered as following us. The real influences of Heaven are indeed to be known, by

* 1 Cor. x. 4.

their being not fugitive and transitory, but abiding. There may be gleams of religious joy, which may cheer for the moment the irreligious man ; there may be affections apparently devout, which in an instant disappear ; but those are not the waters from the true rock : they are not from that rock which will follow us, which rock is CHRIST.

May our religious affections be steady and abiding. May we not only occasionally attend to the things of the Spirit, but may we also “live in the Spirit,” and “walk in the Spirit,” that so we may rise superior to all the “lusts of the flesh *,” and never again be overcome by them. May we “continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel †.” May we “keep in memory” that which hath been delivered to us, in order that we may not “have believed in vain ‡.”

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, the fountain of all grace, the author of all our temporal mercies, and through JESUS CHRIST, the giver of all spiritual blessings, grant unto us, we beseech Thee, Thy Spirit, that so, while we are passing through this evil world, we may have all holy consolations dwelling in us ; and may be strengthened to proceed on our daily

* Gal. v. 16.

† Col. i. 23.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 2.

course, evermore walking in those paths into which Thou hast called us.

O GOD, we confess that we are without strength in ourselves; and that we are often ready to faint under the trials, which come upon us. We dwell as in a barren and thirsty land, where no water is. The world is unable to supply our wants; and it cannot raise our drooping spirits. Its pleasures and riches soon vanish, and are gone; and oftentimes every prospect seems to fade before us. Our friends are removed from us; or they experience the stroke of death: and every thing around us is vanity; our houses and possessions, and all in which we have delight, cannot be called our own: so uncertain are they, and so soon must we expect to take leave of them for ever.

Impressed, O LORD, with a sense of the vanity of this life, and the value of eternal blessings, we kneel down to ask of Thee that grace in our souls, which shall be more to us than all earthly mercies. Give us, we pray Thee, a hope in CHRIST, through the Holy Spirit. Give us a view of that everlasting world, to which we are hastening; give us a cheerful expectation, that, when we shall leave this earth, we shall dwell with CHRIST, and shall be made partakers of the joy of heaven.

And, O LORD, pour out upon us, an earnest love to all that is right and excellent: may we desire those things, which Thou approvest; and hate those things, which Thou abhorrest. Let not our

affections follow after forbidden things; but may they ascend continually towards those which are pure, and holy, and heavenly; and be fixed upon God and His grace. May we delight in prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving; and may we direct our hearts to JESUS CHRIST; whom, having not seen, we desire to love; and in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we would rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

And, O GOD, we beseech Thee, continue to us these spiritual blessings, through all the days of our pilgrimage here. May that Rock, from which we drink, still follow us. May we, day by day, receive the fresh aids of Thy grace, strengthening us yet more and more against our sins, and causing our consolations, which are in CHRIST, still more to abound. Thus may we indeed be blessed of GOD, in the midst of all the trials and troubles, which we meet with here; and at length, through the multitude of Thy mercies, and the riches of Thy grace, may we be brought to that place of everlasting rest, where we hope to dwell for ever with the LORD.

These prayers we would humbly present, in the name of JESUS CHRIST our blessed SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLVI.

EXODUS, XVII. 8—16.

8 *Amalek is overcome by the holding up of Moses' hands.*

15 *Moses buildeth the altar JEHOVAH-nissi.*

8 ¶ THEN came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands

were steady until the going down of the sun.

13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *for* a memorial in a book, and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-nissi:

16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn *that* the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.

COMMENTARY.

MANY were the trials which the children of Israel experienced in the wilderness. Amalek, the chief of a tribe which sprang from Esau, now makes war against them. No sooner had they escaped from their distress through want of water, than this new calamity overtakes them. And what is human life but a history of trial after trial, some of which are sent to punish our past sins; some, to prove the reality of our grace; while some are unavoidable, considering the land in which we dwell, and the many enemies which infest it?

A remarkable fact is here mentioned, namely, that while the Israelites were engaged in battle with the Amalekites in the plain, Moses stood on the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand, having Aaron and Hur with him. “And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.” We further read, that when Moses’ hands were heavy, Aaron and Hur stayed them up until the going down of the sun: and that Joshua, who headed the Israelites, at length discomfited Amalek and his people, with the edge of the sword.

Many of those passages in the Old Testament, which relate things out of the ordinary course, are very fruitful of instruction:—for example, we learn, from the present narrative, the efficacy of prayer. Moses is described as standing at the distant top of the hill, while thousands of Israelites and Amalekites at the bottom are opposing sword to sword: but we are told that it was not the superior skill of either general, or the predominating valour of either host,—it was the lifting up of the hands of Moses, which decided the success of every onset, and gave the final victory. The Amalekite was seen exerting his strength, and the Israelite stood determined to overthrow him: and the battle, like every other battle of the warriors, was “with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood * ;” but,

* Isaiah, ix. 5.

amidst all this fury of the combatants, the GOD of armies was present; and He ordained victory, or defeat, according as His chosen prophet Moses held up his arm on the mountain top, or let it down.

First, then, let us learn hence to put our trust, not in man but in GOD. What are modern armies, but instruments by which GOD still works His own purposes, often withholding that success from their exertions, which He may be ready to give to the pious prayers and intercessions of His people?

Secondly, let those, who in time of calamity do not mix with the battle, — let those who remain alone as it were on the mountain, and cannot go down into the plain, — pour forth their supplications for their country. Let those, who cannot fight, at least pray. Let their prayer indeed be chiefly for CHRIST'S spiritual kingdom: for the prosperity of His Church, and for victory over the enemies of His Gospel; but let their intercession be likewise offered for their sovereign and country, for deliverance from all secret conspiracy and from all open violence, for peace in all our borders, and for such plenty as may suffice to supply our poor with bread.

But let us take another view of this passage. The arms of Moses frequently dropped through weariness; and it was difficult to hold them up. Moses was a mediator between GOD and the Israelites; but he was a weak and sinful man. He was

only the shadow of that great Mediator, who was to come.

While we lament, therefore, that the hands of Moses should have ever fallen down through weariness ; and that, through the weakness of this intercessor, the cruel Amalekites should occasionally have prevailed ; let us rejoice, that we have an Advocate who is never weary ; and who, though once He took our nature upon Him, and was compassed with infirmities, and “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*,” is now ascended up on high, “having spoiled principalities and powers†,” — where “He ever liveth to make intercession for us‡.” While we then are exerting our feeble powers here below against our spiritual enemies, may the lifting up of the hands of this great Intercessor in Heaven continually prevail : and at length may we be “made more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us §.”

* Heb. iv. 15.

† Col. ii. 15.

‡ Heb. vii. 25.

§ Rom. viii. 37.

PRAYER.

O GOD our Heavenly FATHER, LORD of all power and might, who rulest over the armies of heaven, and over the inhabitants of the earth, who commandest, and it is done, —incline us ever to give unto Thee the glory, which is due unto Thy name ; and ever to behold Thee, with the eye of faith, as governing all things.

O grant us grace to see Thy hand in all Thy dispensations towards us. Many are our troubles and difficulties here : many are the conflicts, in which we are engaged : and many are the deliverances, which have been wrought out for us. It is Thy hand, O LORD, which bringeth every thing to pass : it is Thy power, which protects us : it is Thy mercy in CHRIST, —the great Captain of our Salvation, and the great Mediator, —which gives all success to us in spiritual things. Unto Thee, O LORD, whose ears are always open unto our prayers, through the intercession of that blessed SAVIOUR, do we make our supplication, this morning : beseeching Thee to bless us through the day, and to give us strength against all our spiritual enemies. O send Thy grace upon us, that so in every hour of temptation and trial, we may prevail. Arm us, we beseech Thee, for every conflict ; sustain our cause against every adversary ; and make us at

length to become more than conquerors over every temptation, through Him who hath loved us.

We beseech Thee, O LORD, to be present with us in this our daily duty of prayer: may it be not our duty only, but our privilege and our blessing. Deliver us from all evil thoughts which may assault the mind; and do Thou graciously cause the truths, which we hear, to have power in us, and to prevail.

We pray, also, for the success of Thy Gospel, over all the world. O may the hands of all Thy ministers, in every country, be strengthened, when they go forth in Thy name, to contend with the armies of the unbelievers. May the stout hearts of sinners be brought low; may the arms of their rebellion against Thee be laid down; may the kingdom of Satan fall; and may CHRIST be exalted on the earth.

We lift up our prayer, also, for our Queen and country; and for deliverance from the power of our enemies. Continue peace in our time, O LORD, because there is none other, that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O GOD. Thou alone canst protect us, or provide for us. Thou alone canst go forth with our fleets, and our armies; and without Thee all human efforts fail. We pray Thee, to teach us to put our trust in Thee, and not to put any confidence in man. We pray Thee also to raise up, in Thy Providence, many holy men, men of faith and prayer, who may intercede in behalf of this

nation, at Thy throne; and whose intercession may, through the power of the great Intercessor, at length prevail.

And, O LORD, incline us all to call upon Thee, in frequent as well as fervent prayer, not only for ourselves, not only for our country, and our friends, and relations, but especially for the Church of CHRIST, in all its members; and more immediately for all those, in every place, for whose spiritual welfare we may more particularly be bound to pray.

We offer up, O LORD, these our humble and imperfect petitions, in the name of that blessed Redeemer, that great and all-prevailing Intercessor, JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLVII.

EXODUS, XVIII.

1 *Jethro bringeth to Moses his wife and two sons.* 7 *Moses entertaineth him.* 13 *Jethro's counsel is accepted.* 27 *Jethro departeth.*

WHEN Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, *and* that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt ;

2 Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back,

3 And her two sons ; of which the name of the one *was* Gershom ; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land :

4 And the name of the other *was* Eliezer ; for the God of my father, *said he, was* mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh :

5 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God :

6 And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

7 ¶ And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of *their* welfare; and they came into the tent.

8 And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, *and* all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and *how* the LORD delivered them.

9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

10 And Jethro said, Blessed *be* the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

11 Now I know that the LORD *is* greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly *He was* above them.

12 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to

eat bread with Moses' father in law before God.

13 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

14 And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What *is* this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:

16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make *them* know the statutes of God, and his laws.

17 And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest *is* not good.

18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee: for this thing *is* too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with

thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, *to be* rulers of thousands, *and* rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

22 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, *that* every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the burden* with thee.

23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee *so*, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.

25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the

people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

27 ¶ And Moses let his father in law depart: and he went his way into his own land.

COMMENTARY.

WE here find Moses appointing magistrates to judge the people. Moses had been accustomed to determine all disputes himself; but they grew to be so many, that he had not time to hear them all; and many persons, who had causes to be tried, are said therefore to have stood all the day waiting.

It is melancholy to think that there are so many controversies in the world; and that in every country it should be necessary to employ so great a portion of the time of its ablest men, in the business of settling litigations; this is one proof of the corruption of our common nature.

Moses, at the suggestion of his father in law, proceeded to provide out of all the people able men;—such as feared God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and made them rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and

rulers of tens. These were to judge the smaller causes; every great matter being reserved for his own decision. Moses is not said to have acted by Divine appointment; but there seems reason for supposing that the measure was approved by God; since Jethro, in giving the counsel, refers to the presence, and the command of God: and Moses, without blame, follows that counsel.

It is worthy of notice, that Moses chose these magistrates himself, and did not call together the people to choose them. The great object was to obtain good men; and if there had been reason to suppose that the election of the people was under all the circumstances of the case likely to secure better men than the mere act of Moses, unquestionably the people, rather than Moses, ought to have had the choice. And thus in all ages and countries the great point is to provide good governors and magistrates; if good men preside, it is comparatively unimportant, whether they are procured by the choice of the whole people, or by that of a small part of the people, or by that of a few great men, or by that even of a single person.

It must however here be noticed that Moses was an extraordinary person, extraordinary on account both of his uprightness, and of the Divine authority which had placed him at the head of the Jewish people: he might be justly conscious that he should choose more advantageously for the people, than they were likely to do for themselves. Moreover

he had been the acknowledged ruler and judge for a long time before; and on him therefore the choice naturally devolved. Moses did well in taking upon him the choice; and those men do well, who now take upon them to appoint persons to fill important offices, having long done it in virtue of the constitution of their country, provided they appoint "all men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness."

Let us rejoice when we see men of integrity in the highest stations, for they will, like Moses, place upright men in authority under them. Let us also be thankful that justice is administered with so remarkable impartiality in so disordered a world, and in so sinful a land, as this.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, by whom kings reign, and princes decree judgement, and who hast ordained that there should be rulers in every land, who are to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them who do well, grant, we beseech Thee, that, in this our country, all things may be so wisely and orderly conducted, that we may not want faithful and upright men to rule over and judge this people.

We would pray Thee to raise up continually, in Thy Providence, able men, and such as fear Thee, men of truth and hating covetousness, who shall be

willing to take upon them the arduous work of executing the laws, and of restraining the violence of the wicked. Incline, O LORD, we beseech Thee, all our governors and judges, to act wisely and uprightly. Inspire them with courage to repress iniquity; let them rule also, with all the meekness of wisdom; mixing mercy with judgment; and condescending to the cares of the meanest of the people.

We pray Thee, O LORD, to bless our sovereign: to establish her throne in righteousness; and to prosper her days; and grant, that, under her, we may be religiously and quietly governed. Give her wisdom to choose those to stand around her who fear Thee, and are fitted for their several stations. Bless *also the Houses of Parliament, as well as* all magistrates; granting, unto every one, wisdom to know his duty, and integrity to fulfil it. Give to the people, also, a thankful, humble, and obedient spirit; and put a stop, we pray Thee, both to war and desolation, as well as to civil discord and violence, by removing from among us, and all men, ignorance, and false religion, and superstition, and error; and by making known more and more, throughout the world, the pure and peaceable Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

O LORD, we would add our prayers and intercessions for the Church of CHRIST. Purify and strengthen it, in all its members, and make it to be at unity with itself. Give Thy grace especially to

those who are in any kind of authority in it: particularly in our own favoured land. And O let all ministers of CHRIST walk worthy of that holy Gospel, which they profess; commending Thy truth, by the purity of their lives; and declaring it, at the same time, with all integrity and faithfulness, yet with compassion to the souls of men, and with all meekness and humility, as ambassadors of JESUS CHRIST.

And now, O LORD, we commend ourselves and each other, unto Thee. Do Thou sanctify us all; purify our hearts by Thy holy Spirit; that so our lives may be holy: and that we may be each of us unblameable and unrebukeable in Thy sight, adorning the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR, in all things.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLVIII.

EXODUS, XIX.

1 *The people come to Sinai.* 3 *God's message by Moses unto the people out of the mount.* 8 *The people's answer returned again.* 10 *The people are prepared against the third day.* 12 *The mountain must not be touched.* 16 *The fearful presence of God upon the mount.*

IN the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *into* the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall

be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people : for all the earth *is* Mine :

6 And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 ¶ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

10 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day : for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the

people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that ye go not* up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death.

13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

14 ¶ And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at *your* wives.

16 ¶ And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

18 And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as

the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

20 And the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses *up* to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

22 And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

23 And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

24 And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest He break forth upon them.

25 So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

COMMENTARY.

THIS chapter is introductory to that which relates the delivering of the law of the Ten Commandments by GOD from Mount Sinai; and it deserves our very serious attention on that account. It is a chapter designed to communicate to us high ideas of the holiness and purity, as well as of the greatness and majesty of GOD; for He is to be had in reverence of all them who draw nigh unto Him. He is exalted infinitely above us, and is not to be approached by men of a trifling mind, or of corrupt and unsanctified hearts. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day, and to morrow; and let them wash their clothes,” (this, indeed, was a ceremonial cleansing, but it was typical of the purification of the inner man,) “and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed unto yourselves that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it. Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death; there shall not an hand touch it.”

But it was not merely with a view of exhibiting the purity and majesty of GOD, that these awful preparations, before the giving of the Law, were enjoined. It seems also to have been designed to

inspire terror; for the Law is intended to alarm us; “the Law was our schoolmaster,” says the Apostle, “to bring us unto CHRIST, that we might be justified by faith* ;” and the Gospel in this respect is even contrary to it. The difference between the one and the other is thus represented by St. Paul: “For ye are not come,” says the Apostle, referring to the chapter which we are now considering, “unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words; which voice they, that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart:—and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake)” —“But,” continues he, in allusion to the lively hopes and glorious grace of the Gospel, “but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to JESUS the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel†.” The general dispensation of

* Gal. iii. 24.

† Heb. xii. 18—24.

the Old Testament was calculated to inspire a reverential fear of GOD ; while a thankful love is the disposition taught us in the New. It is true, that both the fear and the love of GOD are inculcated under each dispensation ; for religion is the same in all ages ; but the same feature was not equally prominent. And as they would have erred, who, in the days of Moses, should have confined their view to the mere terrors of that law which was set before them ; so also do they now swerve from the truth, who, confining their religion to the comforts and privileges of the Gospel, cast off that reverential awe of GOD, which the New Testament obviously unites with the love of GOD and of His SON JESUS CHRIST. That passage of the Old Testament, now under our consideration, which describes the terrors of the Law, is turned to this very use by the Apostle ; he employs it in order to excite the fears of those who live under the Gospel : for, after quoting some of the most terrific words of this chapter, “ See,” he says (to those who lived under the Gospel), “ that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven. Wherefore,” he adds, “ let us” (that is we, who are under the Gospel) — “ let us have grace whereby we may serve GOD acceptably, with reverence and godly fear *.”

* Heb. xii. 25. 28.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, who art exalted above all blessing, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, how shall we worthily approach unto Thee, O Thou most Holy, and Great, and Good. We fall down before Thee with humblest reverence, beseeching Thee, by Thine own Spirit, to prepare our souls for waiting on Thee in an acceptable manner: for to those who are without fear of Thee, Thou, O GOD, art a consuming fire.

We confess, O LORD, that our hearts are unfit to be laid open before Thee; for they have been filled with many sinful desires; our thoughts, our imaginations, and the purposes of our mind, are continually evil. Our very nature is unholy: and we cannot draw nigh to Thee, or meditate on Thy holy law, without confusion of face. O GOD, increase in us, we beseech Thee, this awe of Thy majesty, and this reverence of Thy great name, that we may not displease Thee by our presumption, in approaching Thy throne; but may come at all times, with due preparation of soul, knowing how unspeakably great and holy is that GOD whom we profess to worship.

We pray Thee also, O LORD our GOD, to convince each of us of the excellency of Thy Law; and

of our own utter inexcuseableness, in every transgression of it; that so we may stand self-condemned before Thee; and may confess, that, if Thou deal-est with us, according to our iniquities, we cannot be justified.

We bless Thee, we praise Thee, we magnify Thy name; that Thou hast also given Thy Gospel unto us, even the message of mercy which is by JESUS CHRIST; and we adore Thee, with humble thankfulness, that, through the faith of CHRIST, we may be justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that, receiving every part of Thy sacred word, with due reverence and attention of mind, we may be made partakers of all spiritual blessings. Grant that we may not only tremble at Thy justice; but may also love, and serve Thee. May we be deeply affected with all Thy sacred truths; and lay them up in our hearts, and bring forth the fruit in our lives, of all holy tempers and affections, fulfilling every good work.

And establish us, we beseech Thee, in the true knowledge of Thy grace. Grant that we may not be unstable, and feeble-minded; oppressed with fear; or carried away by an uncertain hope: but let all Thy whole counsels and truths be known unto us. Let the Law, in all its terrors, be seen by us, as well as the Gospel with all its grace: and let us behold the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST: through whom we may have access by

faith, into that grace wherein we stand; and rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD.

Keep us now, O LORD, through this day. May our minds remain impressed with the solemn truths which we hear : and may we be prepared, thereby, for the ready performance of every duty of life, which is appointed for us.

And pardon, O LORD, the many imperfections of these, and all our prayers, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, our blessed SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

XLIX.

EXODUS, XX. 1, 2.

1 *The ten commandments.*

AND God spake all these words, saying,

2 I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

COMMENTARY.

“GOD spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy GOD, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

We are all taught to repeat the ten commandments: but few, it is to be feared, rightly understand them; and fewer still, pay due obedience to them. We may add, that no human being fully keeps them, both in the letter and the spirit; and therefore that, by the deeds of the law, no man living shall be justified.

It must first be observed, that GOD is here speaking to the Jews, His own antient people. The ten commandments were given to them; and, through them, to us. We therefore may expect to find a few expressions, which were adapted to the case of the Jews, more exactly than to the present generation.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.

“ THOU shalt have no other gods before Me.”

COMMENTARY.

This expression means, that we must have or choose to ourselves, the one true and only GOD of the Scriptures. Now in order to know who this GOD is, we must read the Scriptures, and especially the New Testament. He is the GOD who appeared to Moses at Mount Sinai, and gave to him all these commandments. He is the GOD of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of all the prophets and holy men who have lived upon the earth. He was in the latter days more plainly made known, as the GOD and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, whom He sent into the world to die for our sins, and to put His holy Spirit within us. We cannot attempt fully to describe the character of GOD : we will however repeat a few of the many things which the Scripture has said concerning Him. He is “ The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity * : ” — “ From everlasting to everlasting,” He is “ GOD † : ” — “ The Almighty ‡ : ” — “ His wisdom is infinite § : ” — “ The darkness and the light are both alike ¶ to Him.” He “ searcheth the hearts of all the children of men : ” and “ He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righte-

* Isaiah, lvii. 15.

† Ps. xc. 2.

‡ Job, xxxvii. 23.

§ Ps. cxlvii. 5.

¶ Ps. cxxxix. 12.

ousness, by that man whom He hath ordained* ;” and then the wicked “ shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous, into life eternal †.” He is at the same time a God “ full of compassion ‡,” and of “ tender mercy §.” “ GOD is love.” “ Not that we loved GOD,” says the Apostle, “ but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ||.” He described Himself to Moses, as being “ The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands ;” yet at the same time He “ will by no means” excuse or “ clear the guilty ¶,” or persevering sinner. Moreover He is the GOD of nature and providence. He made the world ; and He now governs it—not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. He orders the events which befall nations and individuals. He doth all things both in heaven above, and in earth below, according to the counsel of His own will, being righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.

Let us apply this subject to ourselves ; and first, as to our knowledge of GOD. Do we choose to ourselves the GOD of the Scripture, or some being whose character is more suited to our inclinations, and more indulgent to our sins ? Do we believe in a GOD, who will inflict punishment on the disobe-

* Acts, xvii. 31.

† Ps. cxlv. 8.

|| 1 St. John, iv. 8. 10.

† St. Matt. xxv. 46.

§ St. James, v. 11.

¶ Exodus, xxxiv. 6, 7.

dient, as well as shew mercy to them who love Him, and keep His commandments; who, on the one hand, is ready to pardon, and “will have all men to be saved* ;” and who, on the other, will surely condemn the unbelieving, and who “plentifully rewardeth the proud doer †?” Alas, how many men mistake the character of GOD; some, in one manner; some, in another; according to their various tempers, passions, prejudices, and interests.

And having learned to know GOD aright, do we reverence and fear Him? do we trust, and love, and serve Him? Is our fear of GOD greater than our fear of man? When man requires, or expects, us to do that which GOD has forbidden, whom do we obey — GOD or man? that is the question. Do we trust in Him, or in ourselves? in His help, or in an arm of flesh? And do we love Him (as our Saviour in speaking of this commandment instructs us that we ought to do) “with all our heart, and soul, and mind ‡?” Do we love Him more than our wealth, our pleasure, or worldly interest? “Whom have I in heaven but Thee,” said the Psalmist, “and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee §.” Do we feel thus? Is His favour our great object? If it be, what is the proof of the reality and earnestness of our feeling? Let us look for the answer in our

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

† St. Matt. xxii. 37.

† Ps. xxxi. 23.

§ Ps. lxxiii. 25.

Saviour's words : " If ye love me," said Christ, " keep my commandments *."

When we say that we love a person, and yet refuse to do the thing which he desires, we love him in word only, not " in deed and in truth †." Nor is it one commandment only which we must obey : " For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ; for He that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Thou shalt not steal ‡." Those men are insincere in their whole religion, who, professing to serve GOD in some particulars, deliberately refuse obedience in others. These men do not truly serve GOD at all. Such is the first commandment — and it is the foundation of all the following — It says, " Thou shalt have no other gods but Me," that is, thou shalt have no god in opposition to Me ; neither thy evil desires, nor thy passions, nor any god of thine own imagination, nor any of those idols whom the heathen worship. Thou shalt have for thy god, the one true GOD whom the Scriptures reveal.

* St. John, xiv. 15.

† 1 St. John, iii. 18.

‡ St. James, ii. 10, 11.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, Three Persons and ONE GOD, Blessed for ever, teach us devoutly to adore Thine awful Majesty. Enlighten our understandings, and sanctify our affections, and strengthen our faith, that we may see Thee, and love Thee, and trust Thee, according to Thy word and will. Thou hast made Thyself known unto us at sundry times and in divers manners, by the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Grant us grace, we beseech Thee, to live in the perpetual sense of Thy Presence, and of our continued obligations to Thee, and of our entire dependence upon Thee. Enable us to retain Thee ever in our knowledge; and give us not over to a reprobate mind: but so reveal Thyself to us, by Thy Blessed Spirit, that, in all our thoughts, and words, and actions, we may glorify Thee our GOD, and be thankful.

Thankful we ought to be:—O make us thankful for all Thy gifts in Providence and in Grace; since all are Thine: and, above all other blessings, grant us, O GOD, a grateful heart, ever looking up to Thee in faith and love, and desiring to employ to Thy Glory all the talents of the stewardship which Thou hast committed to us.

Long have other lords had dominion over us; and we have served the world, and the flesh, and

the Devil. Day by day, we have offended against Thee; and have indulged evil inclinations, and have followed the ways, and earned the wages, of sin. Grant, that the time past of our lives may suffice for these things; and that, henceforth and for ever, we may flee from them; and may cast down all the idols of our hearts, and may never again bow down to them; but may take up our cross, and follow Thee.

And in order that the knowledge of Thy will may always be diffused in the world, bless, we pray Thee, the Holy Catholic Church, which Thou hast appointed to be a witness and keeper of Thy Holy Word; and, especially, bless that pure and reformed branch established in these realms:—and, that there may never be wanted a fit supply of persons qualified to promote Thy glory in every station of society among us, bless, we beseech Thee, the Universities and all other seminaries of religious learning. Bless, also, all those who are labouring, whether as Bishops or as Missionaries, to extend Thy kingdom in distant or in foreign lands. And grant, that, in Thy good time, and through the single merits of our LORD and SAVIOUR, all, who now name His name on earth, and all who shall hereafter believe on Him, may be united in Thy Blessed Presence for ever. O LORD, hasten that time, and prepare us for it.

Enable us now and ever to feel the solemn

obligation of prayer. Worms of the earth, we approach the LORD JEHOVAH : — creatures, we approach our Creator : — sinners, we approach our Judge : yet are permitted, and encouraged, to remember, that this Judge, for our sakes, took our nature upon Him ; and in our flesh died for us : — and while on earth, taught and commanded His people always, in His own words, to pray, and to say, —

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

L.

SECOND COMMANDMENT.

“THOU shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them ; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me ; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.”

COMMENTARY.

This commandment was directed more particularly to the Jews. GOD had separated them from the surrounding nations who were idolaters ; and had made a covenant with them, that they should not make to themselves gods, such as their neighbours worshipped : but that He should be their God, and they should be His people. He observes, in this commandment, that He is a jealous God, that is, jealous of His honour ; and it is said in another place, “ My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images*.” He will have no rivals.

* Isaiah, xlii. 8.

The declaration that He would “visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation,” is to be understood as a part of that national covenant which GOD made with the Jews. If the fathers worshipped and served Him, then the children also would continue to have Him for their GOD; but if the fathers went astray and did as the heathen, then the children, in their successive generations, were to be involved in the consequences. And it often happens now that children suffer in a variety of respects, through the crimes of their parents.

Let us then abhor this sin of idolatry into which the Jews were continually falling; let us pray that the name of the LORD GOD may be hallowed over all the earth, and let it be our endeavour, as well as our prayer, that all nations may be delivered from the folly and the guilt of worshipping any but their Maker and their GOD.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast described Thyself as a jealous GOD not willing to give Thine honour to another, teach us to worship Thee with a pure and holy service. Enable us always to remember that Thou art a Spirit, and that Thou requirest them, who worship Thee, to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Enable us always to remember that Thou art love: and

that Thou requirest the affections of the creatures whom Thou hast made.

Grant to us, O LORD, we beseech Thee, such a measure of Thy grace, that we may never mock Thee by the mere forms of worship, while our hearts are far from Thee: but may we live in prayer, and bear about with us continually an awful sense of Thy Presence; and whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, may we do all to Thy glory.

Enlighten us that we may see the evil of our past ways; and strengthen us that we may cast away every idol of this world. May we hate the service of sin; and for ever renounce every evil inclination, which, contrary to Thy command and to our Christian profession, we may hitherto have retained and cherished.

And teach us to thank Thee with our whole hearts for the knowledge of Thy will, and the precepts and promises of Thy Gospel. May we ever remember, — when we behold the state of the world around us, and consider our own happier privileges, — that of him to whom much is given, shall much be required. Thou hast placed us in the midst of light and knowledge; and hast given to us continual opportunities of serving Thee, according to Thy Holy Word. If then the light which is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Grant, O BLESSED SPIRIT, that our hearts may

be renewed by Thy Grace, so that we may feel our blessings and our duties ; and may shew forth our gratitude to Thee for our own portion — by diffusing to others also, by our example and by our influence, the light and the privileges which Thou hast entrusted to us. Teach us ever to know, that while, in ourselves, we can do nothing, we can do all things through CHRIST that strengtheneth us.

Enable us, then, O LORD JESUS, to extend in the world, by our life and conversation, and by all the means committed to us, the knowledge of Thy truth. Bless the labours of those, who, more especially in heathen lands, are endeavouring to enlarge Thy Kingdom. Bring home to Thy flock all Jews, Turks, infidels, and hereticks ; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy word ; and grant that they and we may become one fold, under Thyself the One Shepherd.

These blessings for ourselves, and for all whom we are bound to remember in our prayers, we humbly ask, O FATHER ALMIGHTY, in the name of our only Mediator, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LI.

THIRD COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His name in vain.”

COMMENTARY.

To take the name of God in vain, is, in the most literal sense of the words, to call God to witness a falsehood, or in other words, to take a false oath. A man is sometimes required by law to make oath of the truth of what he says. In this case the judge and the jury may possibly not detect his perjury; but the Lord our God will not hold him guiltless, if he thus dreadfully takes His name in vain. The fear of God is the chief bond of human society. It secures the veracity of the witnesses in our courts of justice; and thus provides the best defence for our liberties, our properties, and our lives. But we ought not only to take care that our oaths should not be false; but all levity in taking them should be avoided. Some take custom-house oaths in a very irreverent manner; and others take oaths of office very lightly; and some take oaths, of a solemn nature, in mere sport; but let us weigh well those awful words, “The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His name in vain.”

We must here speak also of common or profane swearing, a sin which has not the excuse pleaded in favour of most other sins, that some present pleasure or profit is annexed to it. That awful name, which angels reverence and adore, and which all good men hear with a peculiar emotion, is trifled with, and in this sense taken in vain, by a great part of our fellow-creatures, almost every hour of the day. Some add cursing to this profane mention of the name of GOD ; and, when they curse, perhaps are not conscious that they are doing it ; and they think this insensibility an excuse ; but it ought rather to be considered as a proof how inveterate the profane habit has become. Others, perhaps also without knowing it, use the name of GOD to express their surprise, or to make their conversation entertaining.

How awful is the thought that all such persons may hereafter have these words brought against them, as so many unexpected sins, on the Day of Judgement ! It is necessary to be very plain in this particular ; for many of the persons, who are most guilty of this sin in question, cannot, or will not, understand what is said, as addressed personally to them. Let us then direct our attention to what our Saviour Himself has observed, on the subject of this commandment, “ Ye have heard,” said He, “ that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths ; but I say unto you, Swear

not at all — neither by heaven, for it is God's throne ; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool*." To say, "by heavens," or "good heavens," the very expression which some profane persons now use, is thus expressly forbidden by our Saviour. But not only this one phrase, which happened to be in use at the time of Christ, but all similar expressions, are, of course, also prohibited; "Let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay †;" that is, Let your assertions be plain and simple, not profane and violent. Let them consist, as much as possible, in a simple yes, or no; "for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil ‡;" that is, whatsoever is inconsistent with the simplicity of truth and meekness ought to be avoided by a Christian. We ought, perhaps, to interpret the words of our Saviour, as intending to teach us, that all those profane expressions, to which He alludes, come from "The Evil One §."

We will close the subject with two remarks. First, let us beware of violence and passion. Men swear partly through passion: — to restrain passion, is therefore to remove one cause of swearing. Our Saviour calls us to exercise self-command in our conversation, — let us, therefore, be not violent and ungoverned in our speech; but be calm and gentle, and in order to keep our tongue, learn also to keep our hearts. For this purpose, let us learn those

* St. Matt. v. 33, 34, 35.

† Ibid. v. 37.

‡ Ibid. v. 37.

§ Ibid. xiii. 38.

doctrines of the Gospel, which apply themselves to the correction of the heart.

Secondly, let us be serious. The reason why the name of GOD is so much profaned in the world, is, that men are not generally serious. They are under no awe of the Divine Majesty ; they feel no sense of the Divine Presence. They have not experienced the power of religion in their hearts. They have no regard to GOD and to divine things, and hence they speak lightly of them. In vain do we multiply directions not to use this or the other word, because it is profane : a profane mind will substitute some new profaneness in the place of the old which is forbidden ; and will continually betray a person into this sin, without his being, perhaps, at the moment conscious of the particular form in which he exhibits it.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, help us to approach Thee with the deepest reverence ; and in prayer, and in praise, and in thanksgiving, to feel the solemn obligation of calling upon Thy name. Grant, that we may not mock Thee by taking it in vain by a cold and formal lip-service ; but enable us by Thy Grace to pray with the spirit and to pray with the understanding ; that so our sacrifice may be accepted, and our supplications may be hal-
lowed before Thee.

And while we dread, lest we should unworthily, and carelessly, and hypocritically draw near to Thee in prayer, teach us also with watchfulness and anxiety to avoid every approach to levity and profaneness in our daily course of life; and habitually to cultivate truth and purity and sober mindedness in our conversation. Enable us to keep our hearts diligently; and thus to keep our tongues from lying and slandering; from irreverent talking, from foolish jesting, and from blasphemy. And if, in Thy good Providence, the temptations of some of these sins should not assault us so much or so frequently, as they assault other men our fellows, may we labour, more and more, to shew forth, in meekness and in charity throughout our whole conduct, the seriousness and holiness which become our Christian profession. Thou requirest us to honour Thee in our hearts and lives; and Thou hast graciously promised, that them, who honour Thee, Thou wilt honour. Enlighten us by Thy Grace, we beseech Thee; and teach us hourly to recollect, that — alike in our thoughts, and in our conduct; in our conversation, and in our actions; — we are responsible to Thee: and that not only for the outward deeds of the body, but for the idle words of the lips, Thou wilt call us all to account in the Day of Judgement. Help us, O LORD, in time to repent; and in time to flee from Thy wrath — to Thy mercy: for who can abide Thy coming,

or stand before Thy appearing? We desire now to confess with meek contrition our past transgressions; we acknowledge with deep humility our present weakness; — our only hope and our only strength are in Thee.

We beseech Thee always to guide and govern our hearts by Thy BLESSED SPIRIT; and thus to enable us to regulate our tempers, and thus to hallow the workings of our minds, and thus to bridle our tongues, so that in thought and word as well as in deed, we may be gentle and watchful, holy and harmless before Thee, — doing all to Thy Glory, O FATHER ALMIGHTY, in the name of the LORD JESUS; — at the same time, deeply feeling, that without Him we can do nothing; and that, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; and that our refuge and salvation are in Him alone. For His sake, O LORD, and in His words, hear our prayer :

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LII.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

“REMEMBER the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work : but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God ; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

COMMENTARY.

OUR Saviour observes, in the New Testament, that “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*.” That is, the sabbath was made to be a benefit to man, and not a burden to him. We Christians should peculiarly rejoice in it as a benefit. What a blessing is it, especially to the poor, that there is one day in seven, on which they may rest from their work, and unite with their

* St. Mark, ii. 27.

families in worshipping and praising God; in recalling to mind His mercies; and in considering the manner, in which they have been performing their weekly duties. The brutes share in the benefit; for this commandment mercifully provides a day of rest for the ox and the ass.

Some alteration in respect to the sabbath has taken place since this commandment was given. The day has been changed; for we now keep, not the seventh day of the week, which is Saturday, but the first, which is Sunday: because our Lord rose from the dead on the first day; and the name of "the Lord's day*" has for that reason been given it.

Some degree of difference as to the manner of keeping the sabbath day has also arisen. The Jews, who often misinterpreted their own law, thought it wrong to pluck so much as an ear of corn, or to heal a person of his disease, on the sabbath day: and they were extremely strict in many other points. But we have been taught by our Saviour, that this commandment ought not to be construed so severely by us; and it is now generally agreed among the most serious Christians, that both works of necessity and works of mercy are perfectly lawful on the sabbath day.

Let us endeavour to explain, in what manner, it may be presumed, a Christian Sabbath ought to be kept under our present circumstances. First, it

* Rev. i. 10.

should be considered by us as a day of rest from our ordinary labour. The laws of the land provide for its observance in this respect. They forbid shops to be opened, and common employments to be followed on the Lord's day; and they oblige magistrates to take an oath, that they will duly execute the laws, including, of course, this law, of their country. But Christians are called upon to keep the Sabbath holy, in a much higher sense. The word "holy" means—separate or set apart for a religious use. We should therefore consider the Sabbath as a day different from others: and even if necessity should lead us to do some things which make a part of our common work, yet we should bear in mind that it is the Sabbath. Needless work will, in that case, be generally avoided.

Let us remember, then, that all ordinary work, which can be performed as well on the Saturday or the Monday, becomes sinful if done on the Sunday. Cleanliness must be attended to on the Sunday; but this is to be done, where possible, by the preparation of Saturday. Our food must be prepared; but this may be effected with little trouble, even in the largest families; if there be a disposition to spare the labour of the Sabbath. There are few houses, which, in towns at least, can be left empty, during the Divine service; but it is in general sufficient that one person should remain at home, who may take turns with others. It should be agreed between master and servant, and be-

tween one servant and every other, that each shall himself observe the Sabbath; and shall also promote the observation of it among those around him.

But to proceed to what is more material: it is of little use to abstain from bodily work, if the frame of mind be inconsistent with a due attention to the Sabbath. This would be to keep a formal and Jewish Sabbath, indeed. To comply with the letter, but to neglect the spirit, of this commandment is totally to mistake the nature of the Christian dispensation. It should be remembered, that, if Jewish forms are to be less rigidly observed, it becomes us to be the more careful to attend to the main purpose of the commandment: for we are now placed under a dispensation in which all is expected to be "spirit and life*." The Sabbath, as was observed before, was made for man. It was made for his good, and more especially for his spiritual good; whatever, therefore, tends to our spiritual benefit is fit employment for the Sabbath.

With a view to our spiritual edification, public worship has been appointed in all Christian countries. But it is necessary that our minds should be engaged in the service. We should also betake ourselves at home to the instruction of our children, to the reading of the Scriptures, and to religious conversation. If we take our walk abroad, we should encourage ourselves in meditation on Divine things; we should call on our more pious

* St. John, vi. 63.

friends and kindred, whose conversation is likely to turn on topics suited to the day; or we should visit the sick; we should go forth to comfort one who is afflicted; to perform some act of kindness and charity; or to pursue some scheme of usefulness proper for the Sabbath, in which we may be regularly employed.

Such are some of the occupations which become a Christian Sabbath: and since they do not exclude the exercise of the social affections, they may well employ the whole of this sacred season: for that is a poor inconsistent Sabbath indeed, of which only one little part is spent in church, "in building ourselves up in our most holy faith;" and of which the rest is occupied in pulling down what we have been building up, and in promoting forgetfulness of that which we have been hearing. It is the prayer and aspiration of the soul, before we proceed to worship; and the subsequent reflection: it is the self-examination, which we at this time practise; and it is the humble and holy contemplation of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our SAVIOUR: it is the heavenly mind exercising itself upon spiritual objects, and withdrawing itself from worldly things, which constitute the true keeping of the Sabbath. It is thus that we acquire a hope full of immortality, and learn to look forward to that never-ending Sabbath, or day of rest, which "remaineth to the people of God*."

* Heb. iv. 9.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who, as on the Sabbath, didst rest from Thy labours, and didst command us to keep one day in seven holy in remembrance thereof for ever, give us grace without doubting to hallow the Lord's Day always before Thee, and to acknowledge the wisdom and the mercy of this Thy commandment.

Teach us to devote the Day, not grudgingly, or of necessity, to Thy service; but cheerfully, and happily; and enable us by Thy Holy Spirit to feel, that, while it is a blessing to our wearied bodies, it is also a privilege to our immortal souls. May we be watchful of the opportunities of instruction which it affords to ourselves, and considerate of the opportunities of rest, also, which it may afford to others.

And may we feel, not only that the day is separate as a day of rest from common uses, but that it is set apart as a day of prayer and praise, of meditation and contrition, of public, social, and secret devotion—to all Thy Church, in all countries.

Teach us, then, O LORD, to abstain from all conformity to the sinful levity with which the duties and the privileges of the day are often profaned. May it be our delight to serve Thee in Thy House of Prayer; and to withdraw for a

season from the world, that so we may be taught and reminded that this world is not our home ; that here we have no abiding place ; that we are strangers and pilgrims, who have professed to seek an heavenly inheritance, a city whose builder and maker is GOD.

O Blessed JESUS, grant us to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. May our supplications and our confessions, our prayers and our praises, unite with those of Thy faithful people in all nations and languages as the Day returns : may the frame of our minds be on that Day always more and more conformed to Thy will ; and thus growing into the image of our Lord, and feeling an increasing delight in Thy service, and throwing off the chains of sin, and of Satan, may we rise to the full liberty of the children of GOD ; and be fitted, Sabbath after Sabbath, as we advance in age, for the enjoyment of an eternal Sabbath in Thy Presence in Heaven.

And, to this end, grant that we may have, day by day, a reverent sense of Thy Presence on earth : and may feel a growing comfort in the thought, that Thou art always nigh unto us : and thus may every day be Thy day ; and our whole souls and bodies be Thine for ever, through JESUS CHRIST, our Lord.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LIII.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

“HONOUR thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

COMMENTARY.

IN the New Testament it is written, “Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the LORD* :” we there also read, that our SAVIOUR, “when He was twelve years old,” was “subject †” to his parents, and thus gave an example of this obedience. Scarcely is any sight more pleasing than that of a little child honouring his parents; listening attentively to all that is said to him, hastening to fulfil their wishes, and in all things subject unto them, after the example of CHRIST his SAVIOUR: and, on the other hand, how ominous is it, to see a child who is obstinate and disobedient; who does not honour his father, nor listen to the voice of his mother; but must be spoken to again and again, and can hardly be brought to do the thing which is commanded him.

The ill behaviour of some children may be ascribed to a fault in their parents; for the same

* Col. iii. 20.

† St. Luke, ii. 42. 51.

law, which says, "Children, obey your parents," implies, that parents ought to inculcate obedience. In many places, children seem to rule the house; the most important conversation is interrupted by their unseasonable noise; every one is made to wait their time; and all things are rendered subject to their humours. Now this is contrary to what it should be; God has ordained that parents shall direct, and that children shall obey. He has established in the world a plan of subordination: and that person, who begins by rebelling against his parents, in defiance of this commandment of God, will be likely to prove a bad servant, a violent master, an ill-tempered husband, and an undesirable connexion.

Let us now ask ourselves, how far we have fulfilled this law of God: and let us remember, that it ought to be interpreted, as including the several relative duties between man and man. First, then, have we in infancy honoured our parents, both by our conduct, and in our hearts? Have we never grudged the obedience, which we seemed to pay? have we not been in haste to assert our independence, as we grew up? If at an early age we have lost the blessing of parents, have we submitted to those whom the Providence of God has put into their place? Have we endeavoured to repay to all such persons, in their old age, by our affection, and by our bounty, if they needed it, all the care and tenderness and liberality which

they have manifested towards us in our infancy and youth? Have we honoured all our relations in their due degrees? Have we submitted ourselves to our spiritual pastors and masters, ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters? And is it our practice to obey every ordinance of man, for the LORD's sake; to honour the queen; to obey magistrates, not loving to speak disrespectfully of them, nor rashly censuring them in those things which we do not understand? If we are servants, do we obey our masters after the flesh, not with eye-service only, as pleasing men, but as pleasing God, who trieth the heart?

How beautiful is the order of society, when every person adorns the station in which God has placed him; when the inferior pays willing honour to the superior; and when the superior is diligently occupied in the duties of his trust; when the people reverence the king, and the king governs well the people; when children honour their parents, and the parents carefully and piously train up the children; when servants are prompt to obey their masters, and masters deal kindly with their servants; when wives also, and husbands, when brothers and sisters, when partners in business, when landlord also and tenant, when master and workmen, when minister and people, when young and old, high and low, rich and poor, instead of each intruding into the place of others, sit down, each satisfied with his own condition; and when each endeavours humbly, and thankfully, and piously to fulfil the duties of it.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, teach us to reverence Thee above all things, as our Father which art in Heaven ; and, in obedience to Thy will, to discharge all the duties, which Thou hast required of us, towards the earthly superiors, relations, and friends, with whom Thy Providence hath surrounded us.

Enlighten our understandings that we may see, and sanctify our hearts that we may feel, that our duty is ever our interest ; and that, while all Thy commandments are profitable to those who obey them, Thou hast, in Thine infinite mercy, been pleased to give a special honour to this Thy first commandment with promise ; and hast thus directed us to look to the earthly blessings which follow obedience, as well as to the glorious recompense which Thou hast prepared for Thy people in the world to come. But while we humbly trust Thee, and fully desire to obey Thee, and look forward with humble confidence to the rewards of obedience, enable us, likewise, to feel, that the will to serve Thee, and the power to serve Thee, as well as the reward of serving Thee, are all alike Thy gifts ; and that we can do nothing good without Thee.

We beseech Thee to make us watchful and diligent in the fulfilment of every relative duty ; — to the Queen as supreme, and to all magistrates ; to all our spiritual pastors, and to all our personal

and family connexions. Grant that we may always honour and obey our Sovereign as placed over us by Thy good Providence; and may pray for her continually. Guard her, O KING OF KINGS, from all dangers, temporal and spiritual; enlighten her, that she may seek, first, her own salvation; and, then, the good of Thy people committed to her. Give wisdom to her counsellors; and grant them grace to employ their influence to the promotion of Thy glory in the good of Thy Church.

Bless all the bishops and pastors of Thy flock; and give to us the willing ear, and the cheerful heart, that, in teachableness and in obedience, we may maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; serving Thee humbly and holily in that pure and reformed branch of Thy universal Church, of which we are members.

Enable us, likewise, meekly in just subordination, to honour and obey all others, whom Thou hast placed over us.

Grant us grace, also, to discharge faithfully and affectionately all our duties in social and domestic life, according to the various relations, to which we may, each of us, have been called; and to fulfil all those duties as in Thy sight,—fearing Thee, and obeying Thee in love.

These and all things needful for our bodies and our souls, for our temporal and our eternal interests, we ask in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LIV.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

“ THOU shalt not kill.”

COMMENTARY.

THIS commandment is sometimes rendered, “Thou shalt do no murder*,” and very properly, for doubtless, all killing is not intended to be forbidden. Killing was in some cases required by the Levitical law : and, before that law was given, and when as yet there were only eight persons in the world, the word of God Himself declared, “whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed†.” Indeed, the sentencing a murderer to death, by the regular magistracy, after a fair trial, is undoubtedly a means of preventing murder in general.

Murder, in the highest sense, is the putting a person to death through deliberate malice ; but to kill a person by striking him in a passion, without intending his death, or in a duel, or in any private battle, especially if we have been the aggressors, involves, without doubt, much of the guilt of murder. To let a person perish through neglect,

* St. Matt. xix. 18.

† Gen. ix. 6.

whose life has been entrusted to us, well also deserves the name of murder.

But we must proceed further: not only *murder* is to be considered as forbidden by this law, but also an *intention* to murder; and not only an intention to *murder*, but an intention even to *injure*. This law forbids those evil and angry passions which are the seeds of murder. Cain first envied his brother, and then he murdered him. The Pharisees first hated CHRIST, and then conspired to put Him to death. Our SAVIOUR censures the Pharisees for explaining this commandment so loosely as they did; and then proceeds to warn His disciples not even to be “angry with their brother without a cause *;” and the Apostle Saint John has expressly remarked, that “whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer †.”

Again, this commandment may be considered not only as forbidding injuries, but as commanding good will. Our SAVIOUR not only did not torment or injure men; He “went about doing” them “good ‡;” and we should go and do likewise.

Let us then examine ourselves fully respecting this commandment; for many fancy, that, having never been so wicked as literally to kill, they have never violated it. Let us bear in mind that we not only must not kill, but must not intend to kill; not only must not hurt, but must not wish to hurt;

* St. Matt. v. 22.

† 1 St. John, iii. 15.

‡ Acts, x. 38.

but must both wish and labour to serve our fellow-creatures ; and therefore, if any secret malevolence be indulged by us, we are by no means clear of the sin of breaking this commandment.

“Love,” saith the Apostle, “worketh no ill to his neighbour ; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law *.” Do we then love our neighbour ? Do we feel a tender concern never to hurt any one by word or deed ; never to give, even to the least of our fellow-creatures, the smallest degree of needless sorrow or pain ? Do we consider it, as a part of our business in life, to strengthen the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, according to our ability ? Is it our occupation to heal the wounds which others have inflicted ; and, after the example of our SAVIOUR, to relieve both the temporal and the spiritual wants of mankind ? If, through the grace of GOD, we thus refrain from evil passions and evil actions, and thus exercise active and fervent benevolence, towards all men, we shall fulfil, in the letter, and in the spirit, this His commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.”

* Rom. xiii. 10.

PRAYER.

O LORD, who hast taught us, that he who hateth his brother without a cause is a murderer; that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him; and that love is the fulfilling of the Law;—enable us, by Thy Grace, to govern our hearts and regulate our tempers according to the perfect rule of charity. May we ever feel, that the indulgence of evil in small things is the most fatal snare of Satan: that an unrestrained look may lead to adultery, and an unrestrained emotion of anger may lead to murder. May Thy Blessed Spirit, then, rescue us from the beginnings of sin; and pour into our minds such love to Thee,—and such love, for Thy sake, to all our fellow-creatures,—that no place may be found in us for those temptations of malice and uncharitableness, from which the last guilty deed of murder may proceed. Make us meek and gentle and kind and forgiving;—in honour preferring one another; not seeking our own; not easily provoked; thinking no evil. O may we follow the Spirit of our Blessed Master, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; but went about doing good; and who taught us, after His example, to love our enemies; to bless them that persecute us, and to overcome evil with good: and, whenever the pride and selfishness of

our own sinful nature shall resent these lessons, and shall rouse us to wrath and malice, subdue, we beseech Thee, O GOD, by the working of Thy mighty power, that rising of anger, which, if indulged, might make us, in heart, murderers before Thee.

May we ever remember how much we ourselves sin in all we do ; and how much, therefore, we have to be forgiven by Thee. If, then, Thou shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O LORD, who shall stand? We have much, indeed, to be forgiven by our neighbour, also. O grant us grace meekly to acknowledge these our offences ; — our sins before Thee, and our faults towards our fellows ; — and, while we ask forgiveness for ourselves, cheerfully to forgive others. And may we labour to do good to them, not only working no ill to our neighbours, but seeking their welfare, and continually bearing about with us a spirit of compassion ready to relieve the wants of others ; and a spirit of love ready to forgive their wrong-doing ; even as we ourselves hope to be forgiven.

And may the awful thought recur to our consciences, that we may — by our example in evil, or by our influence towards evil, or by our neglect of doing the good which our duty towards our neighbour required us to do — have been guilty of ruining his soul. From such a woe, good LORD, deliver us ; and lay not to our charge the sins of

those, whose souls we may thus have endangered. Have mercy upon us, O GOD, and blot out from the book of Thy remembrance all our offences, all our ignorances, and all our sins ; and may the Grace of Thy HOLY SPIRIT watch over us for good ; and teach us, in the brotherhood of CHRIST, to love all Thy creatures for His sake. Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LV.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

“ THOU shalt not commit adultery.”

COMMENTARY.

IN this law of GOD, as in many others, the highest degree of crime is mentioned; but all the smaller degrees are intended to be forbidden.

Most men will admit that, “Thou shalt not kill,” implies also, Thou shalt not hurt; that the command to “honour our father and mother,” includes the honour due to other relatives; and that “Thou shalt not steal,” means, Thou shalt not deceive or cheat. On the same principle we ought to extend the meaning of the words, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” They imply, that we must not be guilty of any thing which is contrary to strict purity. Indeed our Saviour Himself has thus explained this commandment; for He hath told us, “that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*.” The Scriptures of the New Testament in many places declare strongly against immorality of every kind; and solemnly warn us, after speaking of this and other gross sins, that they who do such things shall not “inherit the kingdom of GOD †.” Those, who deliberately and

* St. Matt. v. 28.

† 1 Cor. vi. 10.

habitually venture on sins of this class, would do well therefore to remember, that they do it in defiance of the plainest threatenings of GOD; and that, while they continue in such practices, they can have no hope of eternal life; for “the Scripture cannot be broken*.”

Every commandment of GOD tends to the well-being of His creatures. If mankind were allowed to indulge all their inclinations as they pleased, what misery would fill the earth! Never perhaps did GOD consult more clearly the temporal felicity of His creatures, than when He gave the law which says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery;” and when He forbade, so unequivocally as He has done, every species of impurity. Instead therefore of saying, as wicked men say, “Where is the harm of following all our natural inclinations?” let us learn to admire the goodness of GOD in this law; and to consider him, who disobeys it, as one of the greatest enemies of mankind; as far more hurtful than the thief or the robber; as a rebel, in the first place, against this commandment of his GOD, and then, as a hinderer of his own happiness, and a destroyer of the happiness of his fellow-creatures.

The well-being of a country depends much on the observance of this ordinance of GOD respecting marriage. It is through the institution of families, that children are brought up in an orderly manner; and that the knowledge of GOD and of

* St. John, x. 35.

His laws is handed down from generation to generation.

Villages and towns are peaceable and happy in proportion as the immoral people of each sex are few, and the family men and women are numerous; and when mutiny or rebellion breaks out in the fleets or armies of a kingdom, it is on the family men serving in them, that we have learnt by experience more particularly to rely.

But some there are who allow all this; and yet, in their own practice, contradict it. Possibly they may think that the crime is lightened in their case, because they take care that no one shall see them. They say to themselves, as is represented by the Psalmist, "Surely the darkness shall cover me*." But are not the darkness and the light both alike to GOD? And is there not a Day coming, when that, which is hidden, shall be made known; and "when GOD shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ†." "Blessed," says our Saviour, "are the pure in heart; for they shall see God‡." In vain do men comfort themselves with the hope of privacy. GOD sees them now; and it is more than probable that their fellow-creatures will, after a while, find them out; or have even detected them already; though not known to have done so; for a thousand accidents may bring the most hidden things to light. GOD also in His just judgement may see fit thus to punish, even in

* Ps. cxxxix. 11.

† Rom. ii. 16.

‡ St. Matt. v. 8.

this world, the secret offender. Thus in the case of David, his guilt was for a time artfully concealed; but GOD was pleased to make it known. "Thou didst it secretly," said Nathan, in the name of the Lord, to David; "but I will do this thing" (that is, I will inflict the punishment) "before all Israel, and before the sun*." It is here also worthy of observation, that there is no sin in which men can indulge to a certain point, and which they can afterwards restrain at their pleasure. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin†." He that allows himself even in sinful thoughts, gives the reins to his passions; and he little knows whither they may carry him.

Let sin then be resisted in its first beginnings: and let any thing, which may become the occasion of falling, be shunned. Let all vicious curiosity be restrained. Let all bad company and books, as well as that "foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient‡," and which the Apostle condemns as quite unbecoming in a Christian, be utterly avoided; and finally, let it be remembered that decency, modesty, and propriety, as well as continual watchfulness, temperance, and self-denial, and every thing which promotes purity, may properly be considered as required by this commandment.

* 2 Sam. xii. 12.

† St. John, viii. 34

‡ Eph. v. 4.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast taught us, that without holiness no man shall see Thee, and hast commanded us to be holy as Thou art holy, enable us now and for ever to overcome all our corrupt affections ; and, being renewed and sanctified by Thy Grace, to serve Thee in body, soul, and spirit.

Enable us daily to remember that we carry about an evil heart and a frail and feeble nature ; that we are daily compassed with infirmities ; and that we have to struggle with temptations from within and from without. Teach us, therefore, to make a covenant with our eyes that they look not on any thing which may lead us to evil : — teach us to make a covenant with our imaginations that they abstain from all approach to a thought of sin : — teach us habitually to feel and fear our own weakness, and to tremble, lest, by yielding to the least indulgence in unlawful things, we should grieve Thy Blessed Spirit ; and lest, finally losing the power of resistance, we should be drawn into everlasting destruction.

O Blessed JESUS, save us from this awful state.

Thou, O GOD, seest us now : Thou seest us always. Thou knowest, whether we are deceiving ourselves, and mocking Thee ; or whether we really and solemnly desire to be saved from the power of Satan ; and to be rendered for ever holy and happy

beings before Thee. Grant, that we may never speak peace to ourselves, when there is no peace; or indulge the false hope that we have attained the purity which Thou requirest by abstaining, if we have abstained, from the grosser sins of the flesh. Enlighten us to see, that Thou commandest us to be pure in heart if we hope to see Thee; and convince us, by Thy Holy Spirit, that the pleasures of sin are but for a season;—that, even in this world, those pleasures lead to death; or are fleeting, and unworthy of immortal natures; and that, in the world to come, they will render us for ever the miserable slaves of the Devil.

O Father of purity, enable us to feel, that even a look may be sin; and that sin—unrepented of—is death. Grant us grace, then, to avoid every thought, word, and action, which is displeasing to Thy holy nature; and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Enable us to keep under our bodies, and to bring them into subjection; and to abstain from all appearance of evil; and may our hearts be a fit habitation for Thy Blessed Spirit, this day and for ever.

BLESSED SPIRIT, enter, then, into those hearts; and evermore dwell in them: and guard us, and all Thy people, and all for whom we are bound to pray, from every spiritual and every fleshly wickedness, and make us Thine now and for ever, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LVI.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

“ THOU shalt not steal.”

COMMENTARY.

To steal is to take, either by force or fraud, that which is not our own ; and it is a sin which is forbidden by the laws, both of God and man. The New Testament assures us, that thieves, whom it names together with adulterers, shall not “ inherit the kingdom of God*.”

Men are commonly led into this sin through some distress or necessity, as they are prone to call it, which has, generally, been brought upon them by their preceding vices. They have been first idle, extravagant, or dissolute, or possibly addicted to gaming : by some of these means, they have brought themselves into straits ; and, in order to deliver themselves, they have taken to thieving.

Pride, also, sometimes contributes to theft. Some men having fallen into distress are ashamed to own it. They will rather take secretly what is not their due, than ask openly some charitable friend to assist them.

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

In order therefore to avoid this sin, let every one beware of the temptations which lead to it.

Another caution must here be given. Men generally advance, by degrees, to the sin of theft. He, for example, who defrauds his master, begins by diverting to his own temporary use the money entrusted to him. He says to himself, "I will borrow this sum, for a few days only; and then I will replace it." This practice having become frequent, he proceeds to take money when there is no chance of his restoring it, soon or ever. He is a thief before he is aware of it.

Others have become hardened thieves by allowing themselves at first in petty thefts. They have not considered, that to steal a little thing may be a great crime. Children, therefore, should be taught to keep their "hands from picking and stealing." The children of the poor ought to be instructed, that to take the turnips out of a field, or the apples out of an orchard, or even the stakes out of a hedge, is the first step to greater theft, and is a sin against their neighbour and against God.

Servants ought also to be on their guard against temptations to those little acts of dishonesty by which they are beset. If they would be strictly upright, they, as well as children, must bring their appetites under subjection; they ought not privately to taste any thing which is not intended for them; they ought not to give away meat or drink to any person to whom they dare not acknowledge

that they give it, or in greater quantity than they dare to own. Servants are, often, tempted to do this, for the sake of maintaining what they call the credit of the family ; but they should ask themselves how far their master is desirous of this sort of credit. Every master's money and goods are his own ; and an honest servant will consider how, in every part of the expenditure entrusted to him, he may best fulfil the wishes of his master, whether expressed or implied. To take perquisites, which are not avowed, is another practice injurious to the master, and not very reconcileable to strict integrity ; for, though the burden of paying them *seems* to fall on the tradesman, the amount, and perhaps more than the amount, is, indirectly, by the increased price of his goods, charged to the master. That servant would do well to suspect himself of breaking the eighth commandment, who has never combated any of the common customs of families, and has never heard himself charged with being too particular.

In buying and selling, it is but too common for each party to try to over-reach the other. Integrity is little regarded where there is great zeal to make a bargain. We exaggerate in our descriptions ; and every such exaggeration tends to give us an undue advantage, and has in it some dishonesty. Let it be supposed, for the sake of illustration, that I profess to sell ten articles, and that I take the money for ten, but deliver only

nine, taking care to conceal the short delivery from the buyer :—this is plain dishonesty : but is not the same purpose effected if I can succeed in persuading the buyer, that each article is one tenth better than it is? I then obtain the value of one more article than is my due.

To deceive in selling a horse, to exalt his merits, but to say nothing of his faults, and to obtain as much money for him as if he had no defects whatever, is but too common an example of this species of dishonesty, and is a clear violation of this commandment.

To affix marks upon goods in order to make them appear to be the manufacture of some person in repute, who was not the maker ; to call them even by a false name ; in short, to say any thing of them which we know not to be true ; is also a breach of this commandment.

While the seller, on the one hand, thus exalts too much the value of the article which he sells, the buyer affects to undervalue it. “ It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer ; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth*.”

In respect to the wages of labour, fraud is often attempted on each side. When a workman or servant pretends to do more work than he really performs, when he spends more idle time than his master is allowed to know of, and yet claims the

* Prov. xx. 14.

wages which would only be due to diligence, he may be said to cheat or steal ; and, on the other hand, when a master requires his servant to toil hard, and pays him little, taking advantage of his modesty and simplicity, or of his willingness and good nature, then the master may be said to cheat or steal. “Give unto your servants,” says the Apostle, “that which is just and equal*.” There is a certain point which may be called the point of justice and equality between man and man, at which each party should aim ; and in proportion as this is missed, the one or the other fails in the strictness of his integrity.

To smuggle, also, is to cheat or steal ; “render,” says our Saviour, “unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s†.” “Render,” says the Apostle, “to all their dues ; tribute, to whom tribute is due ; custom, to whom custom‡.” Our Saviour chose rather to work a miracle than to fail in paying tribute ; and yet He did not live under the best government. It should be remembered, that, if we pay less than our share of duty, some other subject or subjects must pay more : to smuggle therefore is to take money, not from the pocket merely of government, but from that of these other subjects.

It would be easy to add many other common instances of fraud ; but enough has been said to

* Col. iv. 1.

† St. Matt. xxii. 21.

‡ Rom. xiii. 7.

shew, that even this eighth commandment — the one which we are most inclined to boast of keeping — is continually broken. Who indeed is not guilty of some violation of the spirit of it! Consider what a leaning every man has towards his own side, when any question of property is to be decided between him and his neighbour. We all over-rate our own labour and skill and general merit; and expect to have prices adjusted and all things arranged, according to our false view of the subject. Inordinate selfishness is natural to man, and this selfishness is the source of innumerable frauds; it disposes us not only to rob others of their due, but to wrong them without knowing that we do so.

What a view do these considerations open to us of the prevalence of dishonesty! What injuries do men inflict on their neighbour, without being sensible of their transgression; or at least what injuries do they attempt to inflict, though unable to execute their several purposes: for undoubtedly it often happens, that unreasonable claims, on the one side, being opposed by no less unreasonable claims, on the other, the two parties compromise the difference; and the price having been settled fairly in consequence of the struggle, each perhaps departs, complaining of the hardship of the terms imposed upon him. Such are the effects of that partiality, which selfishness occasions, in our judgement.

If then we desire to lay the axe to the root of the tree, and avoid habitual injustice, we must strive

to overcome this selfishness of spirit. But how is this to be effected? The answer is, —By following the word of GOD, under the teaching of the Spirit of GOD. Our Saviour has instructed us, in the very point in question, by giving the following golden rule, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*.” Let then the buyer put himself in the place of the seller; and the seller, in that of the buyer; let the master suppose himself the servant; and the servant suppose himself the master; let each imagine himself in the place of him with whom he has to deal; let him, as it were, plead before himself the cause of his opponent; let him turn counsel on that side, and he will thus find his partiality corrected. Let it be our rule not to determine a question between ourselves and our neighbour, till we have deliberately and dispassionately argued it after this manner.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD, from whom alone proceed all the good things which we enjoy, who hast determined the bounds of our habitation, and hast allotted to each of us such a share of Thy gifts as Thou seest best for us, grant us, we beseech Thee, the further and greater blessing—to receive our portion at Thy hands, whether it be much or little, not only

* St. Matt. vii. 12.

with contentment, but with gratitude. We are unworthy, O LORD, of the least of all Thy mercies. Enable us to employ them heartily in Thy service ; and to do good in our generation with the talents which Thou hast entrusted to us. Grant that we may be ever watchful and ever active ;—continually alive to the unseen realities of Heaven and Hell ; and mortifying all the corrupt affections of earth ;—not seeking the wealth of this world as a good ;—but receiving it, if, in the course of Thy Providence, it shall be committed to us, reverently as a trust.

Enlighten our understandings, and sanctify our desires, so that we may never seek that which Thou hast forbidden ; or injure our neighbour in respect to that which Thou hast bestowed upon him. May we be guarded from that inordinate selfishness, which our fallen nature too often exhibits ; and may we do unto all men whatsoever we would that they should do unto us.

And lest we should yield to great sins, enable us, O GOD, to avoid the least sins ; and to watch against every approach to evil. Grant us grace not only to keep our hands from picking and stealing, but to keep our hearts, also, from every inordinate desire. Pour down upon us, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Spirit, that we may never deceive ourselves ; or allow ourselves in any false way :—speaking peace to ourselves when there is no peace ; and either secretly, or openly, wronging our neigh-

bour by the indulgence of any covetous desire, and the exercise of any selfish and covetous act. Grant us grace to render to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom. And give us tender consciences, O GOD, that we may not defraud our brother in any matter; but may ever act towards him and towards Thee, as those who are hereafter to give account before Thine awful Throne. Make us ever mindful that the time is coming when the gold and silver of this world will be cankered; and when at last, if not even now, we shall see the folly and the guilt of heaping up ungodly treasure together for the last days. We brought nothing into the world; and we shall carry nothing out of it: and the only question then will be, whether we have been faithful in that stewardship which Thy good Providence may have entrusted to us. Enable us, O LORD, to see that Thy Grace only can make us thus faithful: and enable us also always to feel, that, whatever else Thou mayest grant, or withhold, Thou wilt always give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it. Pour out, then, upon us, O Father Almighty, this gift of the Holy Ghost, for the sake of our only Mediator and Advocate, JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LVII.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.

“THOU shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

COMMENTARY.

To bear false witness against our neighbour, means, strictly speaking, to swear falsely against another in a court of justice. How careful should we be, when called upon to give evidence in a public court, to speak “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” We should recollect ourselves, before we begin to deliver our information; we should speak without heat, or malice, or partiality; and we should remember, that even a small error in our evidence, a mistake for instance in a place or date, may possibly be the means of fixing an unjust charge, of taking away the reputation, or the property, nay even the life, of a fellow-creature.

A witness ought neither to speak falsely against the accused person, nor falsely in his favour. To do the one is to bear false witness against the person accused; to do the other, is to bear false witness against the prosecutor, and perhaps also

against other witnesses in the cause. To do either is to hurt the public, who are deeply interested in having a fair and full testimony,—that very public, indeed, being our neighbour.

Men will generally admit, that we ought to take the utmost care thus to speak truth in a court of justice; but it is not sufficiently considered, that we ought to endeavour to acquire a somewhat similar accuracy of speech in our private communications with our neighbour. This commandment is against all false testimony. It condemns the private slanderer, and the magnifier of stories against his neighbour, as well as the perjured person.

Some, through inconsideration, give currency to the lightest rumours against their neighbour. “Some one has told them (but they cannot exactly recollect who) that there is some bad story against such a person:” though they scarcely know what it is, they proceed to tell it; and they supply, by their own invention, the parts which seem necessary to give consistency to the tale.

Some grow warm, as they are telling a story; and are led by this warmth to overstate facts, and consequently to charge guilt too heavily.

Vanity leads many into falsehood. They are very desirous to interest, to entertain, or to surprise their hearers; but they cannot excite attention, unless they magnify: they prefer wit to truth; they cannot resist the pleasure of indulging a sar-

castic jest, or a lively turn of speech, though at the expense of candour and of justice.

But perhaps the most fruitful of all the sources of false testimony is that spirit of envy, and malice, and of jealousy, and pride, which, unless closely watched, will be found to prevail in every human breast. Some one is assumed either to have injured us, or to be ill-disposed towards us, or to stand in the way of our advancement; some one is thought to possess a too great share of the affection of one with whom we wish to be the chief favourite. We are prepared to believe an evil story against such a person on very slight evidence; and not only to believe it, but to spread it eagerly, and to exaggerate it exceedingly. We extol him who is on our side; for this is indirectly to praise ourselves: but let a man be our enemy, or let him only be of a contrary sect to us in religion, or of an opposite party in politics, how strong will then be our disposition to become partial in our judgment; and, through this partiality, to be continually bearing false testimony against him!

In many cases it may happen, that only some slight exaggeration is made, or some little fact is added; and yet these small matters may constitute the whole of the supposed guilt. Indeed, stories circulate through many hands; and therefore, if only a little addition be made by each, an anecdote, which was not worth notice at first, may grow up into a most mischievous falsehood.

How numberless are the lies which are in this manner spread abroad in the world; and how enormous is the evil, of which we are now speaking! Who then is the person on whom the guilt ought to be fixed? Undoubtedly all are guilty who have had a share in the exaggeration. All those who talk at random, all light unthinking people, who are on that account inaccurate, all violent and passionate persons, all who seek to be admired for what they say, and especially all envious and jealous persons, which those never fail to be who are very aspiring and ambitious, together with all bigotted and very prejudiced persons:—every one of these, it is to be feared, is a frequent violator of this commandment; as indeed are all who have not learnt to exercise a tender conscience in respect to what they say, and to guard their lips even in their hours of relaxation. Many do not intend to bear false witness against their neighbour; and yet, either by indulging prejudices, or by being generally inaccurate in respect to truth, continually cause unfair blame to fall in some quarters, and contribute largely to increase that quantity of false testimony which is circulating in the world.

Some attempt to avoid the fault of evil speaking, by running into an opposite extreme; they refuse to tell the faults of which they are fully apprized, and which it is important to reveal; and they do this, on the selfish principle of “not liking to bring themselves into trouble.” Their custom is to praise

every one; in the hope that every one will then speak handsomely of them. But these are not the persons who pay obedience to this commandment; their selfish policy and misplaced commendations deserve only to be censured. As well might the witness in a court of justice, who gives false evidence in favour of the party accused, take credit for his perjury: or the witness, who refuses to give any evidence, take credit for his silence at a time when the public interest requires that he should speak out. Truth and candour are enjoined in this commandment; not flattery and false praise, nor universal silence respecting the characters of men.

Many also, through their ignorance of the nature of true goodness, praise irreligious characters; and are disposed to charge strict and pious men with that prejudice, and with that consequent disposition to false testimony, which we have been condemning, because they do not join in the applause. But let flatterers of this class be told, that all irreligious men are spoken of as wicked, in the word of GOD; and that (as Solomon has said) “he that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD*.”

It may be useful to put to ourselves the following questions, before we proceed to relate a tale to the prejudice of another.

* Prov. xvii. 15.

First, how did I hear the story? from a witness of the fact, or from one who heard it of another? If it came only through the second or third hand, it may be proper to suspend the full belief, until we have seen the eye-witness, or the ear-witness.

Secondly, is even the eye or ear-witness worthy of credit? Is he an enemy of the accused, or has he an interest in lowering his character? Is he credulous, or passionate, or prejudiced? may not his memory have failed him in some particular?

Thirdly, allowing the whole which has been said to be true, may not something have been omitted, which ought to have been mentioned; the addition of which would have made a great difference in the question?

Fourthly, may not I myself in some degree have mistaken my informer? Have I been quite free from prejudice? Have I avoided every error? Have I not innocently misconceived some doubtful expression? There are ambiguous words in every language; and what is said by the speaker loosely and figuratively, is sometimes understood by the hearer too literally and strictly.

Again, may there not be some such contrarieties in different parts of the story as to render it impossible? But if it should be only improbable,—if, for example, it should contain a charge which is contradicted by the general character of the accused, let me not be confident in my belief. We should in general know the character of an accused per-

son, before we spread a report to his disadvantage; and if he be reputed to be religious, we should be particularly suspicious of the tales against him; for the world is much disposed to spread false rumours respecting the truly righteous.

Again, has the person charged had an opportunity of answering for himself? Possibly a new light might be thrown on the subject, if the accuser would consent to meet the person accused, face to face. It is a good general rule to tell our tale first to the person supposed to be in fault.

Lastly, supposing the fact clear, let every one ask himself, what is the use of my telling it? Tell it not from talkativeness, or from secret envy, or from party prejudice.

There may, indeed, be good reasons for speaking out, especially when the crime is serious. The public ought to be warned against imposition; the characters of men ought in a variety of cases to be made known. And, if given at all, the fact ought undoubtedly to be given fairly; but we ought to be as tender, as we properly can, of our neighbour's reputation. If we must speak against him, may we be enabled to do it with regret, not with readiness and satisfaction: and may we try to say nothing in heat; for, if we do, we shall probably exaggerate. And do not let the story turn merely on our own credit; let it stand on the credit of him who told it us; and be always willing therefore (if permitted), to give up our authority.

This subject shall be closed by observing, that the love of our neighbour is the great requisite to our fulfilling this commandment. “Love” (as the word of GOD has taught us) “is the fulfilling of the law*.” If men loved their neighbour as themselves, they would then be jealous of his reputation as of their own; and a thousand rules might be spared. We do not commonly spread false reports against our own wife, or child, or sister, or brother; why? because we love our kindred. Let us then love all men as brethren; and then we shall not be tempted to disobey this Commandment of the Law, or the spirit of the Gospel.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, and that love is the fulfilling of the Law, pour out into our hearts Thy Blessed Spirit, that we may daily be renewed in the exercise of every Christian grace towards Thee and towards our neighbour. Teach us to love Thee above all things, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

O Thou, who art the GOD of all truth and holiness, strengthen us that we may flee from every snare of the Devil, who is the father of lies: and enlighten and direct us, that we may always

* Rom. xiii. 10.

speak truth to our neighbour; and that, while we avoid all malice and deceit towards him, we may likewise avoid all hypocrisy towards Thee.

Shed the Spirit of Wisdom from above into our souls, that we may be pure, and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. And while we are taught by Thy holy Apostle, that the tongue can no man tame, if he trust to his own strength or wisdom; do Thou, O GOD, enable us to bridle it and the whole body. Grant us grace, that we may not think it enough to avoid falsehood when we call upon Thee solemnly to listen to us; but may habitually watch against all those temptations and motions which may lead us in smaller things to violate truth. Keep us from inconsiderateness, and levity, and vanity; which may induce us to injure our fellow-creatures for our own pleasure: guard us from the deeper sins of malice and envy; which may induce us to injure him by deliberate falsehood.

In all our thoughts may we have Thee, O BLESSED JESUS, ever before us: and in all our communications with the world around us, may we desire to act as in Thy presence. While we deal charitably and truly with our neighbour, may we still be strengthened unto holy boldness in Thy sight:—not ashamed of Thee and of Thy word, when the cause of truth shall require us to speak out; but ever ready to maintain right against wrong; and to contend earnestly for the faith;

and—in Thy name—when Thou shalt require us—to go forth against all gainsayers. Yet teach us ever, in Thine own Spirit, to prefer, where we may, a lowly and charitable intercourse with all men:—at all times speaking the truth in love: and whenever Thine honour shall require it, speaking that truth if it be against our neighbour simply because Thine honour doth require it.

Finally, grant us grace ever to bless Thee with our tongues; and, still more, in our hearts and lives, as well as with our lips, to shew forth Thy praise.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LVIII.

TENTH COMMANDMENT.

“THOU shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

COMMENTARY.

MOST of the other Commandments speak of the outward action, and forbid some sin in the life; but this last lays the axe to the very root; for it forbids those covetous desires which are seated in the heart. “Thou shalt not covet any thing which is thy neighbour’s.” One man is in danger of coveting his neighbour’s wealth; another, his authority and power; a third, the praise which he sees given to another. How ready are the poor to covet the supposed enjoyments of the rich! They are under peculiar temptations to break this Commandment. Both rich, and poor, however, are inclined to covet every thing, for which they have a taste. They no sooner behold it, than they are ready to exclaim, “I wish it were mine.”

It is melancholy to think how few are thoroughly

contented with their lot. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the married and the unmarried, the prosperous and the afflicted, have some unsatisfied desire. There is always something possessed by our neighbour, which Providence has denied to us; and we are disposed to fix our whole attention on that single point. If we do not covet our neighbour's house or his wife, there is some inferior thing, some ox or ass, which we are eager to acquire; and we may be as wretched at the thought of not possessing it, as if we had coveted his whole estate.

Thus Ahab, although he was king of all Samaria, being unable to obtain the vineyard of Naboth, which would only have served for a convenient garden of herbs, "laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread*."

This spirit of discontent in all its various shapes is forbidden in the Tenth Commandment; and the contrary temper is required by God who gave it, namely, thankfulness for our lot, patience under trials, resignation under afflictions, and submission to His whole will. How eminently did St. Paul shine in this respect. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need†."

* 1 Kings, xxi. 4.

† Phil. iv. 11, 12.

This Commandment is obviously very strict, because it applies immediately to the heart. It will eventually convict every man of being a sinner, who will pay attention to it. We can perhaps regulate our actions tolerably well. We can maintain our character, we can exhibit such an appearance of propriety and correctness, that our fellow-creatures can scarcely discern a fault in us. But which of us duly regulates his heart? To call away our thoughts from every forbidden thing, to govern well our inward affections and desires, and to fix them always in their due degree on their lawful and proper objects; to suppress even the wish for that which God sees not fit to give; to consider His appointments as ever wise and good; to purify, in short, the springs of action, and “so bring,” as the Scriptures express it, “into captivity every thought to the obedience of CHRIST*,”—this is the great point.

To the heart then, to the heart, and not merely to the actions of the life, let our attention be directed. Thousands, it is to be feared, have been sinners during all their days, and have nevertheless been quite unsuspecting of their sinful state, because they have never examined duly into their motives, nor watched the secret motions of their minds. Through this cause, they have continued ignorant of God, ignorant of themselves, and igno-

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

rant of that salvation which has been provided by the GOSPEL.

Having thus endeavoured to explain these laws of GOD, let it finally be asked whether any one can deny the perfect excellency of them? Are they not such as it is fit for GOD to prescribe, and for man to obey? It has been shewn, that love to GOD and love to man form the foundation of them all; and yet who can deny, that he has disobeyed them? Now it is one great object of the law of GOD to convince men of their guilt; and thus to prepare them for the grace and mercy of the Gospel. “Cursed,” says the Scripture, “is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them*.” But “CHRIST hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us†.” “The Law” therefore is “our schoolmaster to bring us unto CHRIST, that we might be justified by faith‡.” “By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the Law is the knowledge of sin§.” But we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS||;” and thus we “obtain salvation by our LORD JESUS CHRIST¶.” Man, then, being a sinner is under a sentence of condemnation. GOD’s righteous law has already pronounced him worthy of death; GOD nevertheless hath “so loved the world, that He

* Gal. iii. 10.

§ Rom. iii. 20.

† Gal. iii. 13.

|| Rom. iii. 24.

‡ Gal. iii. 24.

¶ 1 Thess. v. 9.

gave His only begotten Son, that, whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*.” But this faith in CHRIST, far from leading men to neglect that law which has been explained, becomes a new motive to obedience, for the believer receives again, as it were from the hand of CHRIST, those same commandments which were first promulgated through Moses. He receives them from that SAVIOUR who died for him. “If ye love me,” said CHRIST, “keep my commandments†;” and his commandments are the same in substance, and are sometimes expressed in the same words, as the law of the Ten Commandments; for it is the object equally of the Old Testament, and of the New, to bring back the corrupted heart of man to the love of GOD and of his neighbour. The Christian therefore studies diligently, and observes carefully, the commands of GOD and of his SAVIOUR. Day by day, he exercises himself in examining his life by them: he prays for grace to walk conformably to them: his best services are imperfect; and he understands so well the extent of his duty, that he discovers in himself much evil which other men do not discern. He therefore does not trust in his good works; though he sees the necessity of performing them. The proper language of our heart is well expressed by a judicious and eminent divine of an elder age: “The best things which we do,” he says, “have some-

* St. John, iii. 16.

† St. John, xiv. 15.

what in them to be pardoned. How then can we do any thing meritorious and worthy to be rewarded? Indeed, GOD doth liberally promise whatsoever appertaineth to a blessed life, to as many as sincerely keep his Law, though they be not exactly able to keep it. Wherefore, we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well; but the meritorious dignity of doing well we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the Law; the little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, GOD knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it: we challenge nothing in the world for it; we dare not call GOD to reckoning, as though we had Him in our debt-books: our continual suit to Him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences*.”

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secret desire can be concealed, grant us, we beseech Thee, such a measure of Thy Blessed Spirit, that we may both discern Thy will, and faithfully perform it.

Thou hast commanded us in Thy word not merely to abstain from grosser sins, from adultery, and from theft; but to avoid every thought and

* Hooker's "Learned Discourse of Justification."—Keble's Hooker. Oxford, 1836; vol. iii. p. 614.

wish of evil, and every covetous inclination. Grant us grace ever to remember that Thou thus requirest purity and self-denial and holiness in the inner man; and not only the outward service of our lips and members, but the absence of every sinful imagination. Enable us, then, we employ Thee, to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, which may cause us to offend: and teach us to restrain every motion of sin in our souls.

Enable us, in respect to the things of this world, to be contented and thankful; in prosperity, to be meek and humble; in adversity, to be resigned and cheerful: and, in every vicissitude of life, to seek not our own will, but Thy will, O GOD.

Teach us, day by day, to watch more and more the state of our heart, for out of it are the issues of life. How easily may we deceive our neighbours by our outward conduct and profession! how fatally may we deceive ourselves! but Thou art not deceived: and in all our evil thoughts, in all our covetous desires, in all the imaginations of sin, which we have indulged, Thine eye has been upon us. May the awful truth be henceforth always present in our souls. Thou, O GOD, seest us: Thou hast known all the secret transgressions of the heart; and Thou wilt hereafter bring our desires, as well as our works, into judgement, unless they are repented of, and forsaken, and blotted out by the blood of JESUS.

Pardon, O GOD, for His sake, all in our past lives

which hath been displeasing to Thee : strengthen us in the days which may yet be to come ; and grant us wisdom and grace to abstain from every thought of evil.

And while we confess our past offences, and feel and deplore our present weakness, and acknowledge that our only help and our only strength are in Thee, teach us to thank Thee with our whole hearts for Thy long-suffering Providence, which still, in the midst of all our transgressions, hath surrounded us with so many mercies of this life— with the means of grace, and with the hope of glory.

Grant, ALMIGHTY GOD, that we may shew forth our sense of Thy goodness by dedicating ourselves anew to Thy service : Enable us to take up our cross, and to follow Thee : — to abstain from every sin, and to flee from every snare ; to regulate every desire of our minds ; and to let our light so shine forth in our lives, that others — seeing our good works — may, with us, glorify Thee, through whose Grace alone those good works proceed.

We ask every blessing in the name of JESUS CHRIST : and in His words desire to conclude our prayers.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LIX.

EXODUS, XX. 18—26.

18 *The people are afraid.* 20 *Moses comforteth them.* 22 *Idolatry is forbidden.* 24 *Of what sort the altar should be.*

18 ¶ AND all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God *was*.

22 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

23 Ye shall not make with Me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

24 ¶ An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen : in all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

25 And if thou wilt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone : for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto Mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

COMMENTARY.

THE verses conclude the chapter, which records the event of the delivery of the Ten Commandments. The people, though they heard not the voice of GOD, perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking ; and stood afar off. Man may well tremble, when he is receiving the law from GOD : for man is a sinner ; and he wants a mediator, who may interpose between him and his tremendous Judge. “ And they said unto Moses,

Speak thou with us, and we will hear : but let not GOD speak with us, lest we die." Blessed be GOD, that One greater than Moses has become our mediator ; and has undertaken to plead our cause, — even JESUS CHRIST, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

A further caution against the sin of idolatry is given to the Jews, at the end of this chapter. Though forbidden in the Second Commandment, it is again guarded against here. O ! how different is the judgement of GOD from that of a great multitude of men on this point ! All the nations of the heathen were prone to idolatry. Enlightened Greeks and Romans fell generally into it. Even their most distinguished sages yielded to the popular practice in this respect. The Jews are here not only forbidden to make to themselves gods of silver or of gold ; but are also instructed to let the altar of JEHOVAH be of mere earth, or if of stone, of unhewn stone ; for it is said, " If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." It is not in the power of man to rear an altar worthy of GOD. The human hand can only dishonour it. Let us learn hence, " that our GOD is a jealous GOD." He is not to be confounded with the gods of the heathen ; nor is He to be worshipped after their manner. He " dwelleth not in temples made with hands *." Heaven is His throne ; and earth, His footstool ; and " the heaven of heavens cannot

* Acts, xvii. 24.

contain Him*.” It is not by altars exquisitely wrought, it is not by buildings adorned with the finest paintings, that we now best honour Him.

He was once honoured, under the old dispensation, by an altar of earth; and He is now honoured by the reverence of the heart, and by simplicity in our outward worship. May we stand in awe of this great and holy Being, who spake in thunder and lightning from Mount Sinai. May we draw near to Him, through CHRIST the One Mediator between GOD and man. May we never corrupt, by any device of man, that holy character which is given of Him in Scripture; and may we sanctify the LORD GOD in our hearts, as often as we enter His holy temple.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who didst proclaim Thy law to Thine ancient people from the Mount which burned with fire, and amidst thunderings, and lightnings, and tempest, but hast spoken unto us in the still small voice of the Gospel, grant us grace to receive, alike with awe and with love, every communication of Thy will.

Enable us to hear Thy word with devout attention; and to apply it to our souls, each one according to his need, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

* 1 Kings, viii. 27.

Enable us to approach Thee in prayer with deep humility and self-abasement, when we look to ourselves, but with filial confidence and holy boldness, when we look to the Great Intercessor, to JESUS the Mediator of the New Covenant. In His Name, and in His Name only, we desire to draw near to Thee. Hear us, O LORD, for His sake ; and grant to us every thing, whether for our bodies or for our souls, convenient for us : since Thou knowest better than ourselves, what is for our good.

Enable us, also, to approach Thee in thanksgiving. Numberless and immeasurable have been the blessings already vouchsafed to us from our youth unto this hour ;—continued and increased to many of us beyond the condition of the larger portion of our fellow-creatures, and renewed to us by Thy bounteous Providence every morning. Grant, that in the frequency and long enjoyment of these blessings our hearts may never be hardened ; but, rather, enable us to feel, that, while our debt of gratitude is enlarging day by day, the sense of that gratitude, if Thou shalt in mercy implant it in us, is itself the chief blessing of our nature.

Enable us also, to feel the privilege of praise ; and, while still on earth, to join with Thy heavenly hosts, in saying — “ Holy, Holy, Holy LORD GOD “ ALMIGHTY, which was, and is, and is to come : “ Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and “ honour, and power ; for Thou hast created all “ things ; and for Thy pleasure they are and were

“ created : — and worthy is THE LAMB that was
“ slain ; for He hath redeemed us to GOD by His
“ blood out of every kindred and tongue and
“ people and nation : great and marvellous are
“ Thy works, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY ; just and
“ true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints.” And
THOU, BLESSED SPIRIT, Lord and Giver of life,
who proceedest from the Father and the Son ;
who with the Father and the Son together art
worshipped and glorified, accept, we beseech Thee,
our imperfect praises, and make our hearts a fit
habitation for Thyself.

But, amidst all our prayers and thanksgivings
and praises, teach us habitually to remember that
we have daily sins to confess ; and daily weakness
to acknowledge and lament. The remembrance of
them is grievous unto us, and the burden of them
is intolerable. But our hope and our strength are
in Thee. Have mercy upon us, most merciful
Father ; for Thy Son our Lord JESUS CHRIST’S
sake, forgive us all that is past : send Thy Holy
Spirit to renew and sanctify our hearts ; and grant
that we may ever hereafter serve and please Thee
in newness of life, to the honour and glory of Thy
Name. Amen and Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LX.

EXODUS, XXIII.

1 *Of slander and false witness.* 3. 6 *Of justice.* 4 *Of charitableness.* 10 *Of the year of rest.* 12 *Of the sabbath.* 13 *of idolatry.* 14 *Of the three feasts.* 18 *Of the blood and the fat of the sacrifice.* 20 *An angel is promised, with a blessing, if they obey him.*

THOU shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

2 ¶ Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgement* :

3 ¶ Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.

4 ¶ If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

6 Thou shalt not wrest the judgement of thy poor in his cause.

7 Keep thee far from a false matter ; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not : for I will not justify the wicked.

8 ¶ And thou shalt take no gift : for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

9 ¶ Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger ; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

10 And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof :

11 But the seventh *year* thou shalt let it rest and lie still ; that the poor of thy people may eat : and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, *and* with thy oliveyard.

12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest : that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

13 And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect : and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

14 ¶ Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread : (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib ; for in it thou camest out from Egypt : and none shall appear before me empty :)

16 And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in thy field : and the feast of ingathering, *which is* in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

17 Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the LORD God.

18 Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread ; neither shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until the morning.

19 The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

20 ¶ Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared

21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not ; for he will not pardon your transgressions : for My name *is* in him.

22 But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak ; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

23 For Mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites : and I will cut them off.

24 Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works : but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.

25 And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and He shall bless thy bread, and thy water ; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

26 ¶ There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land : the number of thy days I will fulfil.

27 I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

28 And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

29 I will not drive them out from before thee in one year ; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

30 By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

31 And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river : for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands ; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

32 Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against Me : for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

COMMENTARY.

WE have, in this and many succeeding chapters, an account of the laws given by GOD for the government of the Jews ; for He was Himself their lawgiver and their king. The commandments, promulgated in this chapter, are directed to the object of restraining selfishness, of prevent-

ing oppression, of providing for the poor and needy, of securing the observance of the Sabbath, and attention to all religious ordinances, and of guarding against the idolatrous worship of the heathen. If the Jews should observe all God's statutes, then He promised to give them that land flowing with milk and honey, which the sinful Amorites, and Hittites, and Canaanites inhabited, and to send His Angel before them, and to bless them in all their ways, and to make them fruitful; and to multiply them, and to be an enemy to their enemies, and an adversary to their adversaries. Thus He was to be their God; and they to be His people.

The minuter and more ceremonial points of the Law are not binding upon us; nevertheless the spirit of every part is worthy of our attention; the compassion, and the mercy, and the purity of worship, inculcated in this chapter, are of eternal obligation; and many of the precepts scattered elsewhere in the book, may be considered as addressed to every generation. It may (for example) be said equally to us, as to the Israelites, in this chapter, "Thou shalt not raise a false report*;" and "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil †;" or "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him ‡." It may be said also to us, "Thou shalt not wrest

* Exod. xxiii. 1.

† Ibid. xxiii. 2.

‡ Ibid. xxiii. 4.

the judgement of thy poor in his cause; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not; and thou shalt take no gift; for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous*.” And again, “Thou shalt not oppress a stranger;” though the motive urged is not the same, namely, “for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt †.”

This chapter, like many others in the Old Testament, abounds in declarations that GOD is a righteous GOD; and that He requireth truth and righteousness in His creatures. We are told elsewhere, “A false balance is abomination to the LORD ‡.” Nor is justice all that is required. We are instructed, in another Scripture, to shew mercy: “Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy§:” and, in another, “he shall have judgement without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy||.” Let us not think that we shall please GOD by forms and ceremonies, or by sacrifices, however costly, which are unaccompanied by true righteousness. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee; but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD¶?”

* Exod. xxiii. 6, 7, 8.

‡ Prov. xi. 1.

|| St. James, ii. 13.

† Ibid. xxiii. 9.

§ Psalm xli. 1.

¶ Micah, vi. 8.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, how great and excellent art Thou in all the earth. Thou lookest down from heaven, and beholdest all the children of men; Thou seest all the evil, which is done under the sun; and Thou sendest forth Thy commandment unto us to abstain from sin, and to seek judgement, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly in Thy fear.

When we reflect, O LORD, how many are the dangers and temptations which are round about our path; and how soon, if we take not great heed to our ways, we are guilty of some injury to our neighbour, or of some trespass against Thee, we are led to pray, that Thou wouldest, daily, more and more, impress our minds with a deep and constant sense of our need of watchfulness, as well as of diligence in examining our thoughts and resolutions, our words and actions. We pray Thee, so to ground us in the great truths of the Gospel, that we may become kind and merciful to others, and patient, and forbearing; even as Thou art long-suffering toward us. Give us also a holy zeal to be beneficent and useful in our generation. Give us uprightness and integrity, that we may do all things without partiality; not following the mere will of man,

but obeying Thy will from our hearts. Pour out upon us also a spirit of compassion and love to all who are in any wise oppressed: may we plead the cause of the fatherless and the widow; the prisoner and the captive; and may we labour to promote the good of all, both in this life, and in that which is to come.

We thank Thee, O LORD, for the various precepts of Thy word, whereby we are reminded of many duties, which we are prone to set aside, and to forget: and we would pray continually for a hearing ear, and an understanding and obedient heart; that we may apply faithfully and wisely to our own condition in life, whatever Thou hast set before us for our instruction. Teach us especially to feel that condescension and mercy, which we discern in every part of Thy word. Teach us also that spirit of kindness and charity, even to strangers who sojourn among us, which Thou requirest from us; may we rejoice to relieve their afflictions, and to minister to their wants.

And while we thus are found fulfilling Thy will, and endeavouring to walk in all Thy statutes and commandments, blameless, we pray Thee to be ever present with us; conducting us through life by Thy gracious Providence, and causing Thy Spirit to rest upon us. May we be kept continually, through Thy power, by faith unto salvation; may we live in Thy faith and fear from

day to day ; may we fight, under the banners of our Saviour, against the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and at length may the LORD stablish, strengthen, settle us ; and make us, through the mercies of our Redeemer, to be meet partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom.

All these things we ask in the name, and for the sake, of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXI.

EXODUS, XXXII.

1 *The people, in the absence of Moses, cause Aaron to make a calf. 7 God is angered thereby. 11 At the intreaty of Moses He is appeased. 15 Moses cometh down with the tables. 19 He breaketh them. 20 He destroyeth the calf. 22 Aaron's excuse for himself. 25 Moses causeth the idolaters to be slain. 30 He prayeth for the people.*

AND when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us ; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron.

4 And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had

made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

5 And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow *is* a feast to the LORD.

6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

7 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*:

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiff-necked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

14 And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.

15 ¶ And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony *were* in his hand: the tables *were* written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other *were* they written.

16 And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is a noise of war in the camp.*

18 And he said, *It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.*

19 ¶ And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder, and strawed *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of *it*.

21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they *are set* on mischief.

23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off. So they gave *it* me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

25 ¶ And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:)

26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who *is* on the LORD's side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

29 For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

30 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up

unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin — ; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.

33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against Me him will I blot out of My book.

34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, Mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

35 And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

COMMENTARY.

How soon do the children of Israel turn aside from GOD to worship a golden calf! Only a short time had passed since Moses came down from the mount, and told the people all the words of the LORD; and all the people had answered with one voice, and said, "All the words, which the LORD hath said, we will do." But now they gather

themselves around Aaron, and say, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him."

It is one thing to vow, with our lips, obedience to GOD; and it is another to be, in our lives, faithful to Him. There are seasons in which even irreligious men promise fair. When the thunder rolled, and the lightning flashed, and the smoke ascended over Mount Sinai; the Israelites bowed down with submission before Moses, and before the LORD; but their goodness was as the morning cloud, and as the early dew passed it away. It is said in this chapter, and the saying is repeated by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that, when the people had made their calf in Horeb, they "sat down to eat, and to drink; and rose up to play." Hence we see, what were the tempers with which the worship of the calf associated itself. It introduced a scene of worldly mirth and festivity. It ministered to the indulgence of the flesh. The religion of CHRIST teaches us to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; to mortify our hearts which are on the earth; and to be holy, as GOD is holy; but the religion of the idolater is generally favourable to sensuality: it is a religion, of which the very rites and ceremonies contribute to sin.

The religion, however, of many who call themselves Christians, too much resembles that idol worship, of which we are speaking; for example, is not the sacred festival of Christmas celebrated by numbers in the same manner with this feast of

the golden calf? The people sit down to eat, and to drink; and rise up to play. To keep a *merry* Christmas is the very thing professed. The lightest mirth is by them considered as a fit way of commemorating the birth of the holy child JESUS. All this indeed is natural; for the carnal mind will ever incline to a religion that is carnal. It can delight itself in no other; and therefore those, who are Christians in name only, will be found to celebrate Christmas, and to keep the Christian Sabbath, by making each of these a season, not of holy joy, but of unthinking mirth and animal indulgence. They may lay aside their work; but they will leave it only in order to sit down to eat, and to drink; and will rise up to play.

But lastly, let us speak of the awful punishment of these Israelites, for their idolatry. "There fell of the people that day about three thousand men:" "and the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf which Aaron made." They had been instructed in the second commandment, which had been just delivered to them, that they should not make to themselves any graven image, nor bow down, nor worship it; and their present punishment was most just and reasonable. Let us not think lightly of the sin of idolatry; for too little fault is found with it, in most of our books on ancient history; and by reading these we are in danger of imbibing very false opinions on this subject.

Many historians seem to think, that, if men are religious in any way, it is enough ; and that it signifies little what is the object of worship. But the God of the Scriptures is a jealous God ; and the substitution of the worship of the golden calf, in place of that of God, is there declared to have been most severely punished. The gods of the heathen are vanity — “ they have mouths, and speak not ; eyes have they, and see not ; they, that make them, are like unto them ; and so are all such, as put their trust in them *.”

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who knowest what is in man, and understandest the evil dispositions of all our hearts ; preserve us, we beseech Thee, from every danger, which is around us. May we feel, that without Thy teaching, we are blind and ignorant : direct us in all the duties of Thy worship and service ; and incline us also to read and meditate on Thy sacred word, that we may know what is Thy whole will concerning us.

We lament, that we are so prone to err from the right way, and to follow either the imagination of our own minds, or the doctrines of men, instead of Thy straight and holy commandments. We lament, that we are so slow to believe what Thy Scriptures teach, and so unwilling to attain the

* Psalm cxv. 5. 8.

knowledge of the truth, by the way of patient diligence and self-denial. We lament, O LORD, that we are often so rash in laying hold on a false doctrine, so prompt in believing the dictates of men, and so unwilling to wait patiently on Thee. We lament, that we fall away so continually into error ; and that we choose a religion suited to our evil passions, to our natural tempers, and to our worldly wishes and inclinations.

Preserve us, we pray Thee, from following any of the devices and desires of our own hearts. Put into us a spirit of watchfulness and self-denial. Teach us to submit to Thy righteous laws ; and to listen meekly to Thy word, in order that we may know all Thy will ; and, that so knowing it, we may fulfil it. Make us humble and teachable, serious and spiritually-minded, diligent and watchful in waiting upon Thee, and earnest in prayer that Thou wouldst direct us into all truth, and deliver us out of every error. Grant that we may not follow a multitude to do evil ; nor be carried away by any evil example of the world around us : but may we prove ourselves faithful, even when many are drawn aside from the truth. May we walk with GOD and be perfect. May we be sound in Thy statutes ; zealous for Thy true worship ; and devoted to Thy cause ; stepping aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left.

O LORD, we pray also for the whole Church. May every one, who names the name of CHRIST,

depart from iniquity. May that holy and heavenly religion, which our SAVIOUR taught, prevail among His visible Church. May no evil passions disgrace it, no earthly pleasures, no vanity or folly mix with it. May Christians be holy, harmless, and undefiled, and keep themselves unspotted from the world. May they be known by the purity, and the temperance, the sobriety, watchfulness, and self-denial of their lives. May their joy and pleasures be not earthly, but heavenly and divine.

O LORD, be with us now this day: be present with us, in these our services at Thy throne: and let Thy Spirit rest upon us in all the duties to which we may be called. We ask it for JESUS CHRIST'S sake.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXII.

EXODUS, XXXIII.

- 1 *The Lord refuseth to go as He had promised with the people.*
4 *The people murmur thereat.* 7 *The tabernacle is removed out of the camp.* 9 *The Lord talketh familiarly with Moses.*
12 *Moses desireth to see the glory of God.*

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it :

2 And I will send an angel before thee ; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite :

3 Unto a land flowing with milk and honey : for I will not go up in the midst of thee ; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people : lest I consume thee in the way.

4 ¶ And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned : and no man did put on him his ornaments.

5 For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye *are* a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

6 And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

7 And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, *that* every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which *was* without the camp.

8 And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose up, and stood every man *at* his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.

9 And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the LORD* talked with Moses.

10 And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand *at* the tabernacle door: and all

the people rose up and worshipped, every man *in* his tent door.

11 And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

12 ¶ And Moses said unto the LORD, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight.

13 Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight: and consider that this nation *is* Thy people.

14 And He said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

15 And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? *is it* not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy

people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken : for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name.

18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me Thy glory.

19 And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee ; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

20 And He said, Thou canst not see my face : for there shall no man see Me, and live.

21 And the LORD said, Behold *there is* a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock :

22 And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by :

23 And I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts : but My face shall not be seen.

COMMENTARY.

THE Scriptures inspire us with the most exalted sentiments of the purity and majesty of God. He is described in this place, as saying, "There shall no man see Me, and live." God is too pure and holy to be seen by us in this our mortal and sinful state. As the sun is too bright to be beheld by any human eye, so the LORD is too glorious to be viewed face to face; and as in order that we may turn our eyes to the sun without being dazzled by its beams, it is requisite that a cloud should intervene, so it was necessary, that some veil or shadow should be interposed, in order that Moses might see the LORD. In answer to the request of Moses, "the LORD said, Behold there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts: but My face shall not be seen."

The general meaning of this passage is obvious. It was intended thus to give to Moses just apprehensions of the greatness and glory of that Being, who had conversed with him, and of the awful distance between them. The familiarity, with which Moses had been permitted to commune with God, at the time of his receiving the law, and at other

seasons, required to be corrected by the means which were now employed.

It may likewise be presumed that the nature of the Gospel dispensation, a dispensation, by which, while God is made known, His glory is veiled through the human nature of JESUS CHRIST, was shadowed forth by this passage of the Old Testament.

How unspeakably great is that GOD whom we worship! He sitteth in the Heavens, and in the Heaven of Heavens. He is “the King eternal, immortal, invisible* ;” and He beholdeth from His throne all the worlds which He hath made, and all the creatures which inhabit them. He ruleth over all. He seeth the heart of the lowest, as of the highest. He weigheth every thought of each individual: and he is a GOD of infinite purity. “The heavens are not clean in his sight †.” “His angels he charged with folly ‡.” Who then is able to stand before Him? All sin is hateful to Him. All hypocrisy and formality in worship, all pride and self-will, all bitterness and malice, all impatience and discontent, and all secret impurity; all dislike of the strictness of His law, all pleading of the heart on the side of sin, all idleness and unfaithfulness in duty, all coldness in the religious affections; all these things are hateful in His sight; for He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He hateth it with a perfect hatred; His face is against it; His character is contrary to it; His laws, His govern-

* 1 Tim. i. 17.

† Job, xv. 15.

‡ Job, iv. 18.

ment stand opposed to it; sin is that which He abhors, and to which He never can be reconciled. Who then can stand before this Holy LORD GOD?

We are all sinners; we hear with some reluctance a description of the strictness of His holiness, even according to that imperfect way in which man is able to speak of it. How much less could we behold Him in the perfection of His glory? Nevertheless how admirably hath GOD tempered His brightness, through the veil of His Gospel. JESUS CHRIST is that veil, through which we are enabled to behold Him. “Mercy and truth are” now “met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other*.” CHRIST hath appeared in the world, and hath become a Mediator between GOD and man; through Him we can view this Holy GOD without fear. We can acknowledge His perfections, can adore the purity of His character, can admit the perfection of His law, and can endure the sight of His glory, because we know that CHRIST has died as the Atonement for sin, and is become the Intercessor for us.

Let us then adore this GOD in CHRIST; let us thank Him for these milder glories in which He hath appeared to us: and while we contemplate His justice, let us also think on His mercy; for “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by JESUS CHRIST our LORD †.”

* Ps. lxxxv. 10.

† Rom. v. 20, 21.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, whose eyes behold the children of men, and who seest every secret thought of our heart, and knowest our inmost desires when we kneel down to pray unto Thee, help us, at this time, to bow down before Thy throne, with reverence and godly fear.

Deliver us, we pray Thee, from all our sins, and from the power of a worldly mind. Give us grace to call on Thee, as creatures who know what a favour and privilege it is, to be permitted to address themselves to Thee, O GOD of heaven and earth, through the intercession of JESUS CHRIST Thy SON. We beseech Thee to maintain in us this day a sense of Thy presence, and an habitual desire to please Thee. Thou art not far from us, O LORD: O let us not be far from Thee in our thoughts; but let us remember how great, and how holy, and how ever-present with us, is that God whom we profess to serve. Help us also to remember Thy purity; for Thou searchest the hearts, and triest the reins of the children of men: and though we may often deceive those who are around us, yet we cannot deceive Thee, before whom we must shortly appear, and whose favour alone is important to us. O LORD, we confess our sin and negligence in times past. We have forgotten Thee, day after day; and our offences have been continually multiplied against Thee. Thine holy eye

hath seen us ; but we have continued unholy — we have followed our own will, not regarding Thee : we have nourished many evil tempers within us : much pride, and vanity ; much anger, and passion ; much prejudice, and inordinate affection ; much self-love, and self-indulgence.

O LORD, we thank Thee for the gift of JESUS CHRIST, for whose sake Thou hast declared Thyself willing to forgive us. We approach Thee as a GOD of mercy, pleading His name ; and rejoicing to draw near unto Thee, trusting in His righteousness and grace. Hear us, O LORD, for His sake : accept our daily supplications and prayers, which we offer up to Thee in His name. O number not our offences, but blot them out of Thy remembrance ; and adopt us into Thy family as children of GOD, by faith in JESUS CHRIST. And give us, O LORD, true repentance, and sincere sorrow for all which we have done amiss. Give us a thorough knowledge of our own sinfulness, and of Thy glory, and a constant spirit of thankfulness and praise for that redemption which Thou hast wrought out for us. And enable us to lead a new and holy life ; devoting ourselves to Him who hath loved us, and given Himself for us, and endeavouring in all things to walk worthy of the Gospel.

These and all our prayers we offer up in the name of JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXIII.

EXODUS, XXXIV.

1 *The tables are renewed. 5 The name of the LORD proclaimed. 8 Moses intreateth God to go with them. 10 God maketh a covenant with them, repeating certain duties of the first table. 28 Moses after forty days in the mount cometh down with the tables. 29 His face shineth, and he covereth it with a veil.*

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first : and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest.

2 And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to Me in the top of the mount.

3 And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount ; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.

4 ¶ And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first ; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as

the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the *guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.

8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

9 And he said, If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O LORD, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; for it *is* a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance.

10 ¶ And He said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou *art* shall see the work of the

LORD: for it *is* a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:

15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and *one* call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

18 ¶ The feast of unleavened bread shalt

thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib : for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt.

19 All that openeth the matrix *is* Mine ; and every firstling among thy cattle, *whether* ox or sheep, *that is male*.

20 But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb : and if thou redeem *him* not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before Me empty.

21 ¶ Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest : in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.

22 ¶ And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

23 ¶ Thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel.

24 For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders : neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.

25 Thou shalt not offer the blood of My

sacrifice with leaven ; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning.

26 The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

27 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words : for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights ; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

29 ¶ And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone ; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

31 And Moses called unto them ; and

Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

32 And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.

33 And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.

34 But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded.

35 And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

COMMENTARY.

THE chief point in this chapter, which shall be noticed, is the commandment given to the Israelites, to separate themselves from the surrounding nations, and not to worship their gods. "Take heed," it is said, "lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, whither thou goest ; lest it be for a snare, in the midst of thee." It is important to call the attention of modern Christians to this peculiarity in the true religion. In the heathen world, there were many gods ; and the worshippers of these were very tolerant towards each other. The worshippers of a god of wood saw no irreligion in him who worshipped a god of stone. Each deemed the other right as well as himself ; or, at least, thought the difference of little consequence : and hence arose the toleration, which unbelievers have so much admired, in the professors of the heathen religion. But when the true GOD revealed himself to Moses, "The LORD thy GOD," said He, "is a jealous GOD ; and His name is Jealous." "My glory," it is said in another place, "will I not give to another ; neither My praise to graven images*." This was a painful part of the Jewish religion ; but it was a very necessary part of it. They were not allowed to say, like the heathens, and like many a heathenish Christian, "All religions are alike ; one

* Isaiah, xlii. 8.

kind of faith is as good as another ; GOD is equally pleased whether he is worshipped under the name of JEHOVAH, JOVE, or LORD ; and we may therefore make connexions and intermarriages with persons of all opinions and of all religions : in religion, it is mere bigotry to entertain scruples on the subject.” In direct opposition to all such sentiments, it is said in this chapter, “Thou shalt make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land ; lest thou go after their gods ; and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice ; and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons ; and thus thy sons be made to go after their gods.”

But is this command confined to the Jews ? Were the Jews only forbid to mix and intermarry with unbelievers ? Doubtless the command was then more definite ; because the idolatry was then more gross than now : but religion is the same in all ages ; and irreligion, much the same also. The GOD of the Christians is a jealous GOD ; the precepts of the New Testament very nearly correspond with those which are given here. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” says the Apostle : “for what concord hath CHRIST with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel* ?” and again, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD ; and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you ; and ye shall

* 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

be my sons and daughters, saith the LORD Almighty*.”

Religion consists much in this ; it consists much in passing over from the company and fellowship of wicked and worldly men, to the society and communion of those who fear and love their GOD. It consists in not making a covenant with the Hivite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite ; lest these become a snare to us, and draw us into their ways. The commandment of old was strict ; and we also should be strict, according to the circumstances in which we stand. We should carefully observe who are truly religious, in order that we may choose them for our friends ; and we should flee from the wicked doers. Our own hearts, indeed, will incline us to seek the society of those whom we resemble. Are we holy ? we shall not choose the company of the unholy. Are we devout ? we shall hate to hear a profane oath, or even an irreverent use of the name of the LORD. Are we diligent, watchful, self-denying Christians ? we shall be fearful of mixing with the idle, thoughtless, self-indulgent crowd ; with those who do whatsoever they like, and who entice others to follow their example. Do we love the name of JESUS CHRIST ? do we delight in the thought of His redemption, and in the mention of His grace ? we shall avoid the companies where these subjects are unwelcome ; and where all is contrary to the religion of CHRIST.

* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who hast proclaimed Thyself to be THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, —but who hast, also, at the same time, made a covenant with Thy people, and hast declared that Thou wilt not suffer Thine honour to be given to another; and that Thou art a jealous God, and requirest the undivided service of Thy creatures, enable us to cast away all the idols of this world, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but to cleave to Thee alone.

Teach us to reverence Thee according to Thy word and will; to observe all Thine ordinances, —to do them; to hallow Thy Sabbath-day; and even—when worldly interests shall most seem to admit a violation of it—“even in earing time and in harvest,”—to shrink from allowing ourselves in any thing upon which we cannot ask Thy blessing.

Teach us to profit by Thy Holy Sacraments: to remember our Baptismal Covenant; and often, in our minds and consciences, to consider the solemn obligations by which we were then pledged to renounce the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Teach us also often, as our age and education and circum-

stances in life shall admit, to approach Thy Holy Table; and to receive there the Holy Mystery of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, to the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, as our bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the sacred symbols.

Teach us in our intercourse with the world to be guided by love to Thee, and by love to our neighbour, for Thy sake. Thou hast commanded us to make no covenant with those who honour not Thy name. May no worldly inducements of pleasure or of gain tempt us to disobey this law of our GOD; or to give any countenance to the sins of others;—but, since Thou hast also taught us, that, in the dispensations of Thy Providence, which may have placed us in the midst of the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, we cannot avoid a passing intercourse with them, enable us, we pray Thee, to watch with more and more earnestness and anxiety, against all conformity to evil;—always dreading, lest, by any means, our intercourse with men of this world should harden them; should endanger our own stability; or should be a stumbling-block to our weaker brethren, who thus, through our conduct, may be led to perish.

O BLESSED JESUS, who, when on earth, didst pray for Thy people—not that they might be taken out of the world, but that they might be kept from the evil—grant to us also, we beseech Thee, the perpetual grace of Thy Holy Spirit.

Enable us, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to Thy Glory:—to receive all things with thankfulness, for the earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; and, at the same time, to avoid the temptations and the snares, which a conformity to this world—in its principles, its tastes, and its practices—will spread in our path. With holy boldness may we press forward to the prize of our high calling:—we have promises unknown to the children of this world, and joys set before us, with which strangers intermeddle not;—grant us grace to realise those promises, and those joys. We know them to be real, because Thou hast invited us to trust in them: enable us to feel them to be real by personal experience. Grant us peace with Thee; not as the world giveth; but as Thou alone canst give: and enable us, firm in faith and joyful in hope, even here to have a foretaste of those immortal pleasures which Thou hast prepared for them who love Thee. Amen and Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXIV.

LEVITICUS, XVI.

1 *How the high priest must enter into the holy place.* 11 *The sin offering for himself.* 15 *The sin offering for the people.* 20 *The scapegoat.* 29 *The yearly feast of the expiations.*

AND the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died ;

2 And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy *place* within the vail before the mercy seat, which *is* upon the ark ; that he die not : for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy *place* : with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired : these *are* holy garments ; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and *so* put them on.

5 And he shall take of the congregation of

the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which *is* for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scape goat.

9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him *for* a sin offering.

10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, *and* to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which *is* for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which *is* for himself:

12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the

LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring *it* within the veil :

13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* upon the testimony, that he die not :

14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward : and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

15 ¶ Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat :

16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy *place*, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins : and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy *place*,

until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

18 And he shall go out unto the altar that *is* before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar round about.

19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

20 ¶ And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy *place*, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

23 And Aaron shall come into the taber-

nacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy *place*, and shall leave them there :

24 And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people.

25 And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.

26 And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterwards come into the camp.

27 And the bullock *for* the sin offering, and the goat *for* the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy *place*, shall *one* carry forth without the camp ; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

28 And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

29 ¶ And *this* shall be a statute for ever unto you : *that* in the seventh month, on the

tenth *day* of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, *whether it be* one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you :

30 For on that day shall *the priest* make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that ye may be clean* from all your sins before the LORD.

31 It *shall be* a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

32 And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, *even* the holy garments.

33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY.

MANY particular directions respecting the divine worship were given by GOD to the Israelites ; and that worship alone was declared to be acceptable, which GOD Himself had dictated. These directions related chiefly to the furnishing of the sanctuary, to the ordination of priests, the purification of the body, and to the offering up of sin-offerings for the people. A great day of atonement was appointed to be kept, once a year : and this is the subject of the present chapter.

The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, has described the day of atonement, in the following manner: “When these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of GOD. But into the second went the high priest, alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.” He adds, “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament, which GOD hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled, likewise with blood, both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the

law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission *.”

If it be asked, Why did the priest confess the sins of the children of Israel, over the head of a scape-goat, and then send the goat away into the wilderness ? We answer, — it was not for the sake of the children of Israel only, but for our sake also, that this was done. Man is a guilty creature. He is as a criminal, whom the law hath condemned, and who is waiting to be led out for execution — as those sheep or goats, which, under the law of Moses, were to be sacrificed. The Israelites were the peculiar people of GOD ; but they also were sinners : and, therefore, the way appointed for the forgiveness of their sins was this. A sheep in some cases, or a goat in others, was directed to be killed as it were in their stead — the innocent animal was to die ; and they were to live. The sins of the people were to be confessed by the priest, over the head of the sheep or goat ; the hearts of the people uniting in the confession : and then the animal was either to die, or to escape to the wilderness, bearing all the sins of the people on its own head, and was never more to be heard of.

Such was the ceremony appointed for the Jews ; and it evidently typified the sacrifice, which was in due time to be made by JESUS CHRIST. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, this is very distinctly attest-

* Heb. ix. 6, 7. 19, 20, 21, 22.

ed: for it is there said, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him, that did the service, perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." And then it is added, "But CHRIST being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands; — that is to say, not of this building; — neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. — For this cause, He is the mediator of the New Testament. — It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves, with better sacrifices than these*."

Unquestionably, therefore, that which was spoken of, in this chapter, as done by the priest, for the children of Israel on earth, is a pattern of that which CHRIST has done for us, in respect to heavenly things. CHRIST is entered, not into the holy place made with hands, "but into heaven

* Heb. ix. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15. 23.

itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*.”

CHRIST hath appeared once in the end of the world, “to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgement: so CHRIST was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation †.”

Let us therefore bless GOD for JESUS CHRIST — let us take care that we make due confession of our guilt; and that we put our whole faith and trust in His sacrifice, that so our sins may not be any more remembered against us. Most important is the lesson taught us in this chapter. If CHRIST do not bear our sins for us, we must bear them ourselves: we must suffer their everlasting punishment. But how is our guilt to be transferred to Him? The Scriptures declare, that it is by Faith. “By Him all, that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses ‡.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST §.”

* Heb. ix. 24.

‡ Acts, xiii. 39.

† Heb. ix. 28.

§ Rom. v. 1.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful LORD our GOD, we, the creatures, whom Thine hand hath made, desire now to bow ourselves down before Thee, acknowledging and bewailing our ingratitude, and our offences. We have sinned in thought, word, and deed. Thou art our GOD : but we have not honoured Thee, as our GOD. From our youth up, we have turned aside from Thee : and, as we have advanced in years, have multiplied our transgressions against Thee. Temptations have come across us : an inviting world hath presented itself to us : and, at the same time, an evil and treacherous heart hath been dwelling in us. And how has our early forgetfulness of Thee led us on to every evil : what a proud, impatient, unthankful, unrepenting spirit have we harboured : how much good also, which we might have done, have we neglected to do : and how much sin have we committed in our hearts, and in our lives !

But, especially, when we reflect, O LORD, on Thy great goodness in the Gospel ; when we think how Thou hast sent Thine own SON to save us ; how Thou hast put the Bible into our hands ; and hast given us the ordinances of Thy grace for our salvation ; when we think, also, how little we have profited by all these mercies ; how thoughtless and unmoved we have still been, while hearing of this

great salvation, we may well be covered with confusion of face; and if the same Gospel did not forbid it, we should now sink into everlasting shame; and depart from Thy presence in utter despair.

O LORD, we would confess all our sins before Thee: but, in the midst of our deepest convictions of guilt, we would, nevertheless, lift up our eyes unto Thee, with humble faith, and hope; because Thy SON JESUS CHRIST hath come into the world to die for us; and to be the SAVIOUR of our souls. He hath endured the curse for us. He is the LAMB of GOD, who taketh away the sins of the world: and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Here then, O LORD, do we fix our faith. We behold Him stretched on the cross for us: we see Thy wrath falling on His devoted head—we trust in His all-atoning blood: and we desire to view Him, also, as sitting on Thy right hand, in heaven, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

O LORD, establish us, we beseech Thee, in the faith of CHRIST thus crucified, and thus risen for us. May the knowledge of this salvation enter into our souls. May it fill us with admiration and thankfulness, and with holy comfort, and peace, and joy. May the faith of CHRIST subdue our fear; may it silence the accusation of our consciences; and give rest to our troubled spirits.

And now, O LORD, remembering, every day we live, this Thine infinite mercy in JESUS CHRIST,

may we devote ourselves henceforth to Thy service, as those, who are no longer their own, but are bought with a price: and may we glorify Thee, with our bodies and our spirits, which are Thine. Cause us this day to be truly devoted to Thee: and let us walk, as the redeemed of the LORD, and the candidates for a happy immortality.

Pardon, O LORD, the imperfection of these our prayers, and accept and answer them for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXV.

NUMBERS, XI.

1 *The burning at Taberah quenched by Moses' prayer.* 4 *The people lust for flesh, and loathe manna.* 10 *Moses complaineth of his charge.* 16 *God divideth his burden unto seventy elders.* 31 *Quails are given in wrath at Kibroth-hattaavah.*

AND *when* the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard *it*; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp.

2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

3 And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

4 ¶ And the mixt multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

5 We remember the fish, which we did eat

in Egypt freely ; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick :

6 But now our soul *is* dried away : *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

7 And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

8 *And* the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it : and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

9 And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

10 ¶ Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent : and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly ; Moses also was displeased.

11 And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant ? and wherefore have I not found favour in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me ?

12 Have I conceived all this people ? have

I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which Thou swarest unto their fathers?

13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me.

15 And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in Thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

16 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

17 And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.

18 And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the

LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for *it was* well wth us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

19 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

20 *But* even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which *is* among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

21 And Moses said, The people, among whom I *am*, are six hundred thousand footmen; and Thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

22 Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?

23 And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

24 ¶ And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered

the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

26 But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

27 And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put His spirit upon them!

30 And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31 ¶ And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let *them* fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits *high* upon the face of the earth.

32 And the people stood up all that day, and all *that* night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers; and they spread *them* all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

33 And while the flesh *was* yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

34 And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.

35 *And* the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

COMMENTARY.

THE children of Israel were a murmuring generation. Already they had on many occasions murmured against Moses, and against the LORD. Not only did they murmur now, because they were weary of the manna ; but they had also murmured before, on account of their not having obtained it. They murmured, when they were in Egypt—they murmured, when they were come out of Egypt ; though miracle after miracle had been wrought for their deliverance, they ceased not to provoke the LORD, both by their complaining, and by their unbelief.

There are murmurers in all ages ; and they nearly resemble each other. They are never well ; to-day one thing troubles them ; and to-morrow, another ; and however favoured by Providence, they do not cease to complain ; for they become weary of their very mercies, as these Israelites grew weary of the manna sent them from heaven.

Complainers often turn their thoughts to former times, when perhaps they were more favourably circumstanced in some one particular, though less favourably in many others. They are disposed to fancy that they were then happier on the whole ; and wish to return to their former condition, however hard it may have been. Thus the Israelites, through their disposition to murmur at their pre-

sent lot, forget the cruel bondage of Egypt ; and remember only the fish, which they did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now, said they, is our soul dried away ; there is nothing but this manna left before our eyes.

Have we never in this manner forgotten our present mercies, and remembered our past blessings, only with a view of making them the occasion of our present complaint ? May we be enabled to beware of this spirit. We read, that, when the people complained, it displeased the LORD ; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed many of them.

We must here remark, that Moses also was guilty of impatience : he complained, indeed, of the complaints of others ; but thus he erred, as well as they. Moses, however, was in very trying circumstances. If many persons successively come and lament their grievances to us, we soon grow weary of their importunity : and perhaps we repel them from us, though we ourselves have given them some cause of complaint. Moses had the charge of six hundred thousand persons, reckoning the footmen only : the murmurings of these men were most unreasonable ; and they almost threatened his very life. Yet let us not pronounce Moses miserable on this account. He was at this time highly honoured of the LORD : and in proportion as his trials were great, his service was emi-

ment ; and in general the grace of meekness was afforded to him in such a degree, as peculiarly to qualify him for his station. GOD, indeed, was pleased, by means of these very trials, to work up this grace of meekness in him to a great height. And we, if we rightly bear our troubles, if we receive them as dispensations of GOD, and pray for grace to improve under them, may hope, by means of this fatherly discipline, to have our faith strengthened, and our tempers formed for greater services.

But we must contemplate, also, the unbelief, and hardness of heart of the Israelites. Though they had seen so many miracles, they did not believe that GOD could again deliver them. Yet He again works a great miracle in their behalf ; He sends multitudes of quails, which supply food for this immense host. Surely, therefore, they will now neither complain nor disbelieve. Alas, there were many then, as there are many now, whom no mercies can soften ; whom no wonders of Providence can strike ; whom no manifestations of the Divine goodness, no fulfilment of their very wishes and prayers, can cure of their inveterate spirit of complaint.

Let us conclude by an accommodation of this whole passage to our spiritual condition. The journey of the Jews to Canaan may be considered as some type of our journey, through this world, to a land of everlasting rest ; we have left, if we are true Christians, the bondage of our sins : and, through the good hand of GOD, who is as a cloud

to us by day, and a pillar of fire by night, we are making our way through the midst of many difficulties, and in the face of numerous enemies, to a heavenly habitation, CHRIST being our Leader and the Captain of our Salvation.

And are we never guilty of complaining of the hardships of the Christian warfare? Do we never look back to the world, to that Egypt, whence we came out? Do we never cast back a longing eye after those vain and forbidden pleasures which we have left? Do we not become tired of prayer and praise, of reading the Scriptures, and of exercising ourselves unto godliness; and thus say in effect, like these children of Israel, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick*?" We remember the unrestrained indulgence and enjoyment in which we once allowed ourselves. We then indeed were in bondage to sin; yet we walked after the way of our own hearts.

May we be taught by the Spirit of GOD to beware of complaining of His most holy ways. May we be enabled to run with patience the race set before us; and may we never be weary of His service.

* Numbers, xi. 5.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, whose Providence hath brought us together as an household, and who hast during the past night refreshed us with sleep, and again callest us to adore Thee in solemn worship, sanctify the hearts now before Thee, and enable us to approach Thine awful Presence in a deep sense of Thy Majesty, and of our own absolute dependence on Thy goodness.

Teach us ever to remember the mercies and deliverances which we have experienced from our youth up unto this hour : and if, in Thy wise and fatherly care over us, ought should arise to check our present enjoyments, teach us more and more to feel that Thou art still and ever our Father ; and save us from a murmuring spirit and an unthankful heart ; and guard us alike from envying our neighbours, and from regretting with unsubdued will any good thing which Thou mayest have withdrawn from us. Weak and blind and ignorant as we are, we cannot discern what is best for us : — do Thou, O LORD, who knowest better than ourselves what is for our good, and who art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve, — provide for us all things needful for us : — and whatever else Thou mayest give or take away, grant us in this world knowledge of Thy truth ; and, in the world to come, life everlasting.

Enable us, O LORD, to feel habitually the sense both of Thy Providence and of Thy Grace.

May we honour and obey those whom Thou hast set over us; and may we be taught by Thee to pray for them in love. Teach us to look with charity towards those who may differ from us; and to rejoice at the good which others may be enabled to do—in Thy name—even though they follow not with us. May THE LORD put His Spirit upon all people, and may all the kindreds of the earth be brought into one fold under One Shepherd.

While we pray for Thy continual Blessing, and acknowledge all the bounties which we receive from Thee, teach us to feel deeply our utter unworthiness of the least of all Thy mercies. We have sinned grievously against Thee, O LORD, in thought, word, and deed: yet Thou desirest not the death of a sinner; but still—by all Thy long-suffering goodness—invitest us to repentance. When we read of the backsliding and ingratitude of Thine ancient people, and when we are tempted to say that our hearts would not—in their circumstances—have been so hard and rebellious as were their hearts, bring home to our consciences, O LORD, all our own sins against light and against knowledge,—sins of which we have often professed to repent, and sins into which we have, again and again, after such profession, plunged more deeply than before. We have no hope in ourselves; but thanks be to Thee, O GOD, which givest us

the victory through our Lord JESUS CHRIST; redeeming us—by the blood of the covenant—from the punishment of our sins; and rescuing us—by the Grace of the HOLY SPIRIT—from the power of our sins. O make us thus for ever Thine: and grant us the full persuasion, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.

In His blessed name and words we conclude our prayer.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXVI.

NUMBERS, XIII.

1 *The names of the men who were sent to search the land.*
17 *Their instructions.* 21 *Their acts.* 26 *Their relation.*

AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

3 And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel.

4 And these *were* their names: of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur.

5 Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori.

6 Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

7 Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph.

8 Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun.

9 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.

10 Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi.

11 Of the tribe of Joseph, *namely*, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.

12 Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli.

13 Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael.

14 Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi.

15 Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

16 These *are* the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.

17 ¶ And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this *way* southward, and go up into the mountain :

18 And see the land, what it *is*; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they *be* strong or weak, few or many.

19 And what the land *is* that they dwell in,

whether it *be* good or bad ; and what cities *they be* that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds ;

20 And what the land *is*, whether it *be* fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time *was* the time of the first-ripe grapes.

21 ¶ So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath.

22 And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron ; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, *were*. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

23 And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff ; and *they brought* of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

24 The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

25 And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

26 ¶ And they went and came to Moses,

and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.

27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

28 Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

31 But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.

32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the

children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

33 And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here the first account of the land of Canaan. It was a fruitful land, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD had foretold. The cluster of grapes was an earnest of the plenty to be found in it. If the children of Israel should obtain possession of it, their temporal happiness seemed likely to be complete.

Moses sends forth persons to view the land; but they disagree as to the report which they bring back. How comes it so to pass that men differ in their account of the same thing:—that they can travel to the same place, see the same objects, and yet return, some bringing an inviting, and others, a most uninviting description? The answer is, that the tempers of men are various; and that these make a difference in their judgements: and that, having judged falsely, they perhaps proceed

to describe more falsely. Few faithfully follow truth. With most of us, every thing is in extremes.

Let us beware of judging, while we are under the impression of passion, or of cowardice, or of any unreasonable impression. Let us pray for a calm and sober mind; that we may conceive, of men and things, as they are, and not as an eager fancy paints them.

The greater number of the men, who were sent out by Moses as spies, brought an evil report, even of the land of Canaan, because they went forth under the influence of fear. Being without faith in God, they had not courage to meet the difficulties in their entrance into the land of Canaan. "We be not able," said they, "to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we:" and "the land, through which we have gone, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people, that we saw in it, are men of a great stature.—And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers; and so we were, in their sight." Thus did their terror mislead them. Every Canaanite seemed a giant; and every Israelite, a man of a most diminutive size. To the honour of Caleb, however, it is recorded that he stilled the people, for he was a man of another spirit; and he said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Caleb, having faith in God, was animated by the difficulty in his way, to make the more earnest and immediate effort; while

the unbelieving Israelites were induced only to think of going back to Egypt, or of lying down in despair.

We may each of us apply this subject to our spiritual affairs. We are beginning, let it be supposed, to think of religion. We turn our face towards the heavenly Canaan. We read our Bible and other religious books. We hear the Gospel; and enter into the society of religious persons. Here then is a new land before us, with which we are unacquainted; and a question arises, whether it be a good land, or not? Whether the faith, which we are entering, be one which it is prudent to choose; whether it be practicable, and will lead to a happy issue? "Shall I not repent of pursuing this new course? Christianity," say some, "is an excellent thing—it is a kind of Canaan for the soul. It is a scene of rest from all the troublesome passions, and of abundant spiritual consolations; but how shall I secure an entrance into it?" There is danger, lest, through want of faith, we resemble the unbelieving children of Israel; for even, when we have made some little inroad into the land; when we have acquired some trifling insight into religion; when, for example, we have acquainted ourselves with some religious persons, and obtained a transient view both of their advantages and disadvantages, there is danger of our being disheartened. "It is a land," said these Israelites, "that eateth up the inhabitants thereof:"

and thus many have affirmed of religion. It is destructive of the happiness of those who are devoted to it. There are giants in the land, said the Israelites; so men, who are faint-hearted in the cause of godliness, represent the enemies in their way, as too great to be conquered. Real difficulties are magnified; and imaginary ones present themselves to the mind. The enemy, it is true, is mighty; but it is not considered that, if we press on, God is our friend; and that greater is He, who is with us, than all they who are against us. The timid Israelites desired to go back to Egypt; and the fearful Christian advances a few steps in religion; and then perceiving difficulty, he goes back into the world, and becomes the willing slave to sin. But as Caleb was of another spirit, so also is the true believer. He sees that the land is good, that spiritual blessings are to be obtained. Let us go up at once, he says, into the land and possess it; for, by the help of God, we shall prevail.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, we pray Thee to pour down Thy blessing on this family; and to impress us all so deeply with a sense of eternal things, that we, knowing their inestimable worth, may seek them from Thee, day by day, in earnest prayer; and may be found walking in all Thy statutes and commandments, blameless.

We pray, O LORD, that we may cleave unto Thee with a steadfast faith; trusting Thy word, and following Thy guidance, in all things, and never turning back into the ways of sin. Grant, that we may desire earnestly the knowledge of Thy ways: and may never be dismayed by any obstacles which oppose our progress in the path of our salvation.

Open Thou our eyes, O LORD, that we may see the excellency of true religion; enable us to understand how godliness has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. O may we perceive and feel, how the knowledge of Thee, and of Thy blessed Gospel, is able to calm our passions, to subdue our wills, to remove our mistakes and errors, to make us contented with our lot in life, to render us humble, and peaceable, and kind, and gentle, and compassionate, and forgiving; to make us happy in ourselves, and a blessing to all who are either above or below us, or may dwell any where around us.

We bless Thee, therefore, O GOD, for that holy word which is set before us; we bless Thee for every example of a holy life, which Thou hast permitted us at any time to witness. We bless Thee for the peace and comfort, which we may have ever beheld among Christian society; and for the cheerful hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given to the believer in Thy name. O may we be animated, by the view of these blessings which are held out to us, to pursue our heaven-ward course;

to mark the path which Thy saints have trod ; and to reach after everlasting life. May no difficulties deter us : may no unreasonable fears alarm us : may no trials, which are necessary in our Christian warfare, seem too great to be borne. May we keep the end of all things continually in our view ; and may we so fight, not as uncertainly ; and so run, that we may obtain. And deliver us, O LORD, from all prejudice, and rash judgement, and from all unreasonable and sinful fear. Deliver us especially from thinking, or speaking, unfavourably of the good ways of the LORD : and from preferring a worldly life, and a return to the ways of sin, before the pursuit of true religion. Enable us to deny ourselves ; and to take up our cross ; and to follow CHRIST : believing that His yoke is easy, and His burden light ; and that we shall find rest for our souls.

Take us under Thy care, this day ; and support us, we pray Thee, under all the difficulties of it. Pardon, through the mercies of our SAVIOUR, all our past sins. Give us zeal in Thy cause ; and a true devotedness of heart to Thy service : and thus may we be continually advancing to that place of everlasting peace and joy, where we hope to meet the LORD at length, and dwell for ever in Thy presence.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXVII.

NUMBERS, XIV.

1 *The people murmur at the news. 6 Joshua and Caleb labour to still them. 11 God threateneth them. 13 Moses persuadeth God, and obtaineth pardon. 26 The murmurers are deprived of entering into the land. 36 The men who raised the evil report die by a plague. 40 The people that would invade the land against the will of God are smitten.*

AND all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

3 And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6 ¶ And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes :

7 And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

8 If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us ; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

9 Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land ; for they *are* bread for us : their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us : fear them not.

10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

11 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me ? and how long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them ?

12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13 ¶ And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for Thou broughtest up this people in Thy might from among them ;)

14 And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land : *for* they have heard that Thou LORD *art* among this people, that Thou, LORD, art seen face to face, and *that* Thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* Thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15 ¶ Now *if* Thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying,

16 Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness.

17 And now, I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying,

18 The LORD *is* long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*.

19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of

this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

20 And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word :

21 But *as truly as I live*, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

22 Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice ;

23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it :

24 But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

25 (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.

26 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

27 How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against Me? I have

heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against Me.

28 Say unto them, *As truly as* I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you :

29 Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness ; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me,

30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32 But *as for* you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities,

even forty years, and ye shall know My breach of promise.

35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against Me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

36 And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,

37 Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

38 But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of the men that went to search the land, lived *still*.

39 And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

40 ¶ And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here*, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

41 And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye

transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

42 Go not up, for the LORD *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.

44 But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.

45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here another example of the murmuring spirit of the children of Israel, and another proof of their unbelief, for murmuring springs from unbelief.

Man is prone to unbelief. He is indisposed to put his confidence in GOD; though it is most reasonable to do it. What could be more reasonable, than that the Israelites should now trust in the Divine aid, under all the new circumstances which

should befall them? Had not God shewn signal mercy to their forefather Jacob, and to his sons, through Joseph? Had He not rescued them from their taskmasters in Egypt? Had He not appeared for them, in a striking manner, at the Red Sea, drowning Pharaoh and all his host; and was it not plain, that the Being, who had caused them to triumph so gloriously over the chariots and horses of Pharaoh, was able to grant unto them victory over the Canaanites? Had He not sent a cloud to go before them by day, and a pillar of fire by night? Had He not fed them with manna, from heaven; and, when they were weary of the manna, sent them quails also? Moreover had He not made known His power, by punishing them for their sins; at one time slaying a multitude of Israelites for making a golden calf and worshipping it; and, at another, smiting them on account of their wishing to go back to Egypt? Nevertheless, they now again are impatient; and even incline to slay Moses, on account of his urging them to advance. The whole congregation are also for stoning Joshua and Caleb, because they are of the same mind with Moses. This servant of God might exclaim, in the words of a later Scripture: — “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people*.”

We wonder at the unbelief of these Israelites, and perceive the sinfulness of their unbelief. We

* Rom. x. 21.

condemn them, because, after so many marks of the Divine care, they would not believe. But are we aware that the same spirit of unbelief is in ourselves; and that there is also the same sinfulness in our unbelief? We wonder at the unbelief of others; but we think little of it in ourselves. Which of us trusts God, as he ought? Which of us is not ungrateful and unreasonable, and ready to turn back, like these Israelites, when difficulties obstruct his course? Which of us does not turn aside from his duty, when some temptation arises? A much less obstacle, than an army of Canaanites, is sufficient to repress our ardour, and to induce us to suspend the Christian combat.

How small an evil often leads us to complain. Some of us perhaps scarcely pass an hour, without indulging in discontented thoughts; and every such thought, let it be remembered, is proof of a want of faith in God; for are we not under the conduct of a Divine leader, who orders all things for us, in the same manner as for these Israelites?

May we not also, like the Israelites, derive much reason for trusting in the Lord, from our past experience of His power and goodness? The children of Israel reaped no advantage from the murmuring, which they indulged; or from the rebellion, into which they so frequently fell. And which of us has ever gained any thing by sin? Has our happiness been improved by it? Have we derived any good from our impatience, our ill

temper, our intemperance, our worldliness, our covetousness, our sloth? On the contrary, have we lost any thing truly good, by exercising faith in God? Have we ever suffered through praying to Him, or loving Him, or obeying His commandments? While we have zealously served God, has He not been with us, and blessed us? Has He not been to us, as a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night? When we have been contending in His cause, and have accounted His enemies as our enemies, has not our warfare been happy, as well as successful? And when we have been ready to faint and yield to sin, has not God smitten us? has He not smitten us in our conscience; smitten us perhaps in many of our earthly comforts; and made the fruits of sin bitter to our souls?

God does not leave Himself without witness; though He no longer appears by visible signs, or punishes by extraordinary judgements. The course of His providence, the workings of conscience, which is His vicegerent, as well as the stirrings of His Spirit, all testify for Him. We all know, more or less, that the ways of religion are right ways; that we ought to press forward in a right course, and not to draw back; that we ought, like these Israelites, to march on towards the heavenly Canaan, and not distrustfully say, — “The difficulties of godliness are such, that I cannot encounter them.”

No, let us lay aside our unbelief. Let us, like

Caleb and Joshua, follow the LORD fully ; then shall we, like them, possess the heavenly Canaan ; while the unbelieving multitudes shall fail of that blessed rest.

“ Take heed,” says the Apostle, “ lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living GOD*.” For “ because of unbelief they were broken off : and thou standest by faith †.”

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who alone art worthy to be adored and trusted in, and unceasingly served by all the creatures whom Thou hast made, who hast all power in heaven and in earth, and who never failest them who put their trust in Thee, — pardon us, we beseech Thee, for all the weakness of our faith ; and for all the vain confidence, which we have been wont to put in ourselves, and in an arm of flesh, instead of obeying Thy will, and trusting in Thy word.

Thou hast declared Thyself, O LORD, to be a Father unto all them who have confidence in Thee ; who seek Thy guidance ; believe Thy promises ; and submit themselves to Thy holy word. O strengthen our faith, we beseech Thee ; and deliver us from a worldly, careless, and irreligious life. May we often think on Thee ; and on Thy presence with us ; and on Thy power over us, both

* Heb. iii. 12.

† Rom. xi. 20.

to punish and to save us. May we feel continually, that we are in Thy hands; and that Thou orderest all things concerning us; that Thou seest us in our going out, and in our coming in; in our lying down, and in our rising up; and that, whether at home, or abroad, — alone, or in company, — Thou art ever present with us.

O GOD, we pray Thee to protect us, this day, by Thy mighty power; and to deliver us from the hand of our enemies: give us grace to pursue our Christian course, and to maintain our conflict with sin: help us to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil; enduring hardness as good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST: both bearing the evils, which Thou appointest, and exerting ourselves in every duty, to which Thou mayest call us. We pray, that we may not shrink back from any service, to which Thy Gospel directs us: but that we may trust to Thy continual help in the performance of all those things, which become our situation in life, our opportunities, and our circumstances. May we be ready for every good word and work; may we be faithful, and diligent, and watchful, and circumspect, and careful in all things to please Thee, and to approve ourselves servants of the most high GOD, and believers in JESUS CHRIST.

And may no worldly cares overwhelm us; no sinful thoughts possess our minds; and no idleness take possession of us: and grant, O LORD, that we may advance in our Christian course;

gaining, through the help of Thy grace, some victory over our sins ; and subduing our evil tempers, and inclinations, more than we have yet done.

And pardon, we beseech Thee, our many trespasses in times past : may we repent, and be ashamed of all our ingratitude, and unbelief : for how great, O LORD, hath been Thy goodness to us ; how abundant have been the proofs of the truth of Thy Gospel ; and how have all Thy dispensations towards us united to shew that sin is an evil and bitter thing : and that Thy ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all Thy paths are peace.

We offer these our humble and imperfect prayers in the name, and for the sake, of JESUS CHRIST our blessed SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXVIII.

NUMBERS, XVI.

1 The rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. 23 Moses separateth the people from the rebels' tents. 31 The earth swalloweth up Korah, and a fire consumeth others. 36 The censers are reserved to holy use. 41 Fourteen thousand and seven hundred are slain by a plague for murmuring against Moses and Aaron. 46 Aaron by incense stayeth the plague.

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the sons of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men* :

2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown :

3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, *Ye take* too much upon you, seeing all the congregation *are* holy, every one of them, and the LORD *is* among them : wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD ?

4 And when Moses heard *it*, he fell upon his face :

5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who *are* His, and *who is* holy; and will cause *him* to come near unto Him: even *him* whom He hath chosen will He cause to come near unto Him.

6 This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;

7 And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be *that* the man whom the LORD doth choose, he *shall be* holy: *ye take* too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.

8 And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi:

9 *Seemeth it but* a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?

10 And He hath brought thee near *to Him*, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?

11 For which cause *both* thou and all thy company *are* gathered together against the

LORD: and what *is* Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

12 ¶ And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

13 *Is it* a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not Thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow:

17 And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of *you* his censer.

18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation.

20 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation?

23 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

24 Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

26 And he spake unto the congregation

saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of their's, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.

27 So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side : and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

28 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works ; for *I have not done them* of mine own mind.

29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men ; *then* the LORD hath not sent me.

30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that *appertain* unto them, and they go down quick into the pit ; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

31 ¶ And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that *was* under them :

32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all

the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods.

33 They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

34 And all Israel that *were* round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up *also*.

35 And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

36 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

37 Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.

38 The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates *for* a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.

39 And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had

offered; and they were made broad *plates* for a covering of the altar:

40 *To be* a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which *is* not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.

41 ¶ But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

43 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

44 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

46 ¶ And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar,

and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

49 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

COMMENTARY.

WE have here an awful account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; in which also great numbers of the people joined. A spirit of discontent had frequently prevailed among the Israelites. Nothing would satisfy them. Every day some fresh grievance had occurred. Now it may be generally observed, that, when a people are of this temper, they are ripe for rebellion. The

ground is prepared, on which any ambitious and designing person may scatter with success the seeds of factious opposition, against priests and all persons in authority. He, who is ready to complain of every thing, will be likely to complain of his superiors, as well in the church as in the state ; and then to proceed to rebellion, and to schism.

There is a disposition in some persons to listen to every evil story ; and to believe the worst of what they hear. Thus their minds become inflamed. They are eager to bring down those who are in power ; and if any considerable men, such as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, are willing to place themselves at the head of the conspiracy, the deluded multitude are prepared to follow. They now talk of imaginary wrongs. Justice, as they think, is entirely on their side ; and in the height of their passion, and in the strength of their prejudice, they proceed to overthrow those whom God's providence hath set over them ; saying that, thereby, they are executing judgement on offenders.

It appears from this chapter that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (who probably long had fomented discontent among the people), proceeded to join two hundred and fifty chief men with themselves ; and then said to Moses and Aaron, " Ye take too much upon you." Thus rebellion usually commences. The insurgents begin by saying that their governors take too much upon them. Such a charge may be true ; and may be properly urged, in some

cases. But language of this kind ought not to be hastily credited; and least of all is to be believed, when proceeding from the mouth of men ambitious of power, and at the head of a formidable party. The charge in such cases may be retorted against those who bring it. It might, in this instance, have been far more truly said of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "Ye take too much upon you:" for they were now usurping the power of their lawful rulers; and were laying the foundation of an authority of their own, which would probably have been unlimited.

The argument, used by these conspirators, is worthy of observation: "Ye take too much upon you," say they, "seeing all the congregation are holy every one of them; and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" They affected to speak in the name of the people, and assumed the people to be altogether holy; but who can doubt, that Moses and Aaron were far more obedient to GOD, and therefore far holier, than they; and ruled them with a far gentler hand than that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram?

These are the arts by which the multitude have in all ages been deluded. Designing men pursue the objects of their own ambition, by encouraging complaints among the populace: and also by flattering them with ideas of their own virtue and consequence. A discontented mob is delighted with

the speeches of such flatterers ; and is ready to lift them into power ; but, having once raised them to authority, they find the mask thrown off ; and they are now ruled with a rod of iron.

The sin of rebellion, however, varies according to the ground for it, which has been afforded by the rulers. Moses was a ruler eminent for meekness ; and both he and Aaron were expressly appointed by God. Under Moses, numberless mercies and deliverances had been experienced ; and the Israelites had been governed with remarkable equity. Their rebellion, therefore, shews that rebellion may exist, without any fault on the part of the governors. The mass of the people of Israel had long been unreasonable, and complaining ; and their sin having now reached its height, it pleased God to execute His signal judgement upon them.

The story is written for our admonition. Let us beware of the temper which actuated them. Let us be on our guard against ambitious and designing men ; who flatter our vanity, in order to use us for their own purposes. Let us pay proper submission to our governors. Let us be contented with our station. Let us shew reverence for all those institutions, whether civil or religious, which the providence of God may be considered as having ordained.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast appointed our lot in life, and hast ordered it in mercy, give us grace, we beseech Thee, to be well contented, each of us, with our situation in this world; and to pay Thee daily thanks and praise for the blessings which surround us.

We thank Thee, that we have been born in a land, where the great truths of the Gospel are made known; where the Bible is in our hands; and where we have so many means of grace, and so many helps to our salvation. We bless Thee, that we have been permitted to live, year after year, in peace; that we have been delivered from war and tumults; and that we have been allowed to dwell at ease as a nation, none making us afraid.

We thank Thee also, for all the blessings showered down upon us, as a family: that we are freed from those labours, which are destructive to the body; and from grievous trouble of the mind. Especially we thank Thee for the great religious advantages which we enjoy; that we have line upon line, and precept upon precept: that we have the various truths of Thy sacred word set before us; and that we are reminded continually of all Thy will concerning us.

O LORD, pour out upon us, as a nation, and as a family, a grateful and thankful heart. Take

away from us the spirit of repining and discontent ; and make us all cheerful, humble, and thankful to Thee for Thy mercies ; ashamed of our past ingratitude : willing also to bear each other's burdens ; and ready, each of us, to take the lowest place, as disciples of CHRIST ; remembering that thus He taught us.

Take away from us, O LORD, all pride and ambition, and high mindedness : put down every lofty and aspiring imagination, which exalts itself against the knowledge of CHRIST. May we be ready to submit each of us to those, whom Thy Providence hath set over us : and also, to stoop to those below us : and may we rejoice in every opportunity of showing our moderation, and our Christian meekness, and humility. And specially, we pray Thee, O LORD, to dispose our minds to set the example of JESUS before us, who made Himself of no reputation ; and took upon Him the form of a servant ; and became obedient, even to the death of the cross : who also, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; and when He suffered, threatened not ; who washed the feet of His disciples, and was always among them, as he that serveth : and who hath also taught us, that, whosoever is least in his own eyes, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Pardon, O LORD, all our pride and self-preference in time past ; and put into us better minds. May we all understand our Christian profession ;

may we be lowly in our carriage towards our brethren; being known to be Christians by our conformity to Him, by whose name we are called.

Be with us now, O LORD, this day: and help us to walk according to the spirit of these our prayers, both now, and at all times.

We ask it in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only MEDIATOR.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXIX.

NUMBERS, XX.

- 1 *The children of Israel come to Zin, where Miriam dieth.*
 2 *They murmur for want of water.* 7 *Moses smiting the rock bringeth forth water at Meribah.* 14 *Moses at Kadesh desireth passage through Edom, which is denied him.* 22 *At Mount Hor Aaron resigneth his place to Eleazar, and dieth.*

THEN came the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

3 And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil

place? it *is* no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither *is* there any water to drink.

6 And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

7 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

8 Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

9 And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as He commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*.

12 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

13 This *is* the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

14 ¶ And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travel that hath befallen us:

15 How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers:

16 And when we cried unto the LORD, He heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we *are* in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border:

17 Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's *high* way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

18 And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.

19 And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without *doing* any thing *else*, go through on my feet.

20 And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand.

21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.

22 ¶ And the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto Mount Hor.

23 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying,

24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah.

25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor:

26 And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son : and Aaron shall be gathered *unto his people*, and shall die there.

27 And Moses did as the LORD commanded : and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son ; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount : and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.

29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, *even* all the house of Israel.

COMMENTARY.

ONCE more we read of the complaints of the children of Israel. They now again murmur, on account of their wanting water to drink. Had they then forgotten, how GOD had made the water to flow out of the rock in Horeb, and even to follow them in a running stream through the wilderness? Did they not consider, that the power of the same GOD was sufficient again to save them? As they dreaded the Canaanites, after experiencing the Divine deliverance from the army

of Pharaoh; so they now apprehended that they should die of thirst, though water had before been provided for them by a miracle; for they were a faithless and unbelieving generation. How weary of them should we have been, if we had stood in the place of Moses, and had heard all their complaints! Indeed Moses himself, as well as Aaron, was betrayed into impatience in this instance. Moses addresses them in anger. Instead of *speaking* to the rock, as GOD commanded him; he, in his wrath, *smites* it, twice. Moses and Aaron were highly blameable on this occasion; and it is now declared, that, in consequence of their disobedience, they shall be excluded from the land of Canaan.

Let us beware of an impatient spirit. Let us take heed, lest, like Moses and Aaron, we become partakers of the sin of those over whom we are placed; and whose fault we ought to correct, both by our good example, and by our influence. The children of Israel might have applied to Moses, for water, in a very different temper. Their sin consisted not in asking for it, but in asking in a wrong spirit. "Would GOD," said they, "that we had died, when our brethren died before the LORD." Thus did they impiously wish, that they had shared even in the judgements, which GOD had inflicted on others for their sins. Passion leads men to desire things destructive to themselves, and provoking to their Maker. How much more wisely would these

Israelites have acted, if they had come calmly to Moses, first expressing the remembrance of their former deliverances; and then beseeching him to pray to GOD, to save them out of their present distress,—a distress, they might have added, which their sins had but too justly deserved.

There was then a wrong spirit in these Israelites. Are we troubled or afflicted? Let us not indulge the temper of these children of Israel; but let us meekly and humbly lay the matter before those who may possess the means of relieving us. Let us not preface our story like the Israelites, by saying, “Would to GOD I were dead, rather than condemned to bear the grievance, of which I am going to speak.” We should be calm and temperate in all circumstances; we should believe in GOD who orders all things, and has appointed the event of which we complain, and has ordained it for a trial of our faith. Let every preface to our complaints be rather an acknowledgement of our unworthiness. Both GOD and man are more likely to listen to us, if we forbear from overstating the evils which we endure, and avoid murmuring and discontent.

Let those, whose office it is to redress grievances, take warning from the fall of Moses and Aaron. Let them not administer relief in an evil temper. Let them not do it in anger or unbelief. Let them maintain that character for superior meekness and self-command, which a superior

situation requires. Let them take heed, that they do not fall, like Moses, into the very fault of those who come to them to complain. Finally, let us all implore God, to endue us with a patient mind, that we may pass through this world, without being continually ruffled by the ill humours of those around us; and may on our part be blameless and harmless, shining as lights in the world, in the midst of an evil generation.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who hast placed Thy creatures in a world of trial; and, from the beginning, didst require obedience as the evidence of their love to Thee; and who hast also in Thy Law declared, that cursed is the man who continueth not in all the words of that Law to do them, — teach us, under Thy Blessed Gospel, to acknowledge our long course of disobedience to Thee; teach us to feel our hopelessness and helplessness before Thee. Enable us — thus seeing our guilt and our danger — to flee for refuge to Thee, and to Thee only.

O GOD, Thou hast taught us that the root of all sin is disobedience to Thy word and will. We could not have known sin in its sinfulness except by Thy Revelation: and it is Thy word, and not the wisdom of man, which constitutes what is holy and righteous. Thou didst — from the creation — place good and evil before man, and didst appoint a light and easy test of his obedience; and — when

he had fallen from his first estate — Thou didst, at sundry times and in divers manners, declare Thy holy will to him, and didst call him back unto Thyself; warning him alike of the guilt of disobedience, and of its punishment. Enable us, O GOD, to whom, in these latter days, Thou hast given the clearer light of Thy Gospel, to feel our own greater guilt, if, in the noonday, we wander from Thy path; if we complain of Thy dispensations towards us; if we disregard Thy will; if we rebel against Thy word.

While we thus bear record against ourselves, that our sins are more inexcusable than those of others, teach us to feel that all have sinned; and that there is none righteous before Thee, — no, not one: and that the only safety of man is in Thy mercy through JESUS CHRIST.

O BLESSED JESUS, who wast once offered to bear our sins, and by whom alone we receive the atonement, and who ever livest to make intercession for the sins of the whole world, send down on each of us the HOLY SPIRIT; and renew and sanctify our hearts before Thee. Give us ever to drink of that living water which Thou alone canst give: and pour into our souls such a measure of Thy Grace as may restore and refresh us in the wilderness of this world.

O GOD, great as are our sins, greater still are Thy mercies to our bodies and to our souls. Day by day, as we journey forward, Thou guardest us

from evil ; and Thou wilt guide us by Thy counsel unto glory, if we faint not in the way : if — firm in faith, though weak and feeble in ourselves — we cling to Thine arm, and trust not to human strength or wisdom. One by one, Thou wilt withdraw from us those in whom we have confided, and those in whom we have delighted : prepare us, then, to resign each and all with holy readiness ; and when the righteous perisheth, to lay it to heart — only in entire and cheerful acquiescence in Thy will.

In life and in death, O GOD, make us ever Thine : — when we pass through the last dark valley, be with us : remove all evil angels far from us : be ever our strength and our joy in our pilgrimage ; receive our souls in the day of death, and pardon them in the Day of Judgement, for the sake of our only and Blessed Saviour. Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXX.

NUMBERS, XXI. 1—6.

1 *Israel with some loss destroy the Canaanites at Hormah.*

4 *The people murmuring are plagued with fiery serpents.*

AND *when* king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took *some* of them prisoners.

2 And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If Thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

3 And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah.

4 ¶ And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is no bread, neither is there any water*; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

COMMENTARY.

ONCE more we read of the discontent of the children of Israel. It pleased GOD to send many remarkable judgements to this people, so that their hardness of heart evidently could not be charged, either to a too constant indulgence on the part of GOD, or to a too uniform severity.

He employed the proper means of bringing them to repentance and a right mind; but their minds were corrupted, and their hearts were hardened.

The LORD now sends fiery serpents among the people. They had complained of the manna, or light bread, which had been given them; and, on account of this their sin, GOD sends them fiery serpents.—They had murmured without reason; and are now visited with a most destructive plague; for, whenever these fiery serpents bit the people, the bite was followed by death; “and much people of Israel died.”

So it is with some of us. We lead, like these

Israelites, a complaining life. How often is this the case, even with many professing children of God. We complain of the lot, which Providence appoints for us, of the place which God assigns us, of the persons among whom He causes us to dwell, of the employment to which He destines us, of even the comforts and conveniences which He bestows, and of the insufficiency of all the good things which He gives us, saying, like these Israelites, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." That food, which is adequate to all the wants of the body, is not enough for us; warm raiment and a comfortable house do not satisfy us; common accommodations are too little for our desires. Some are as unthankful for these bounties of Providence, as the Israelites were for their manna from heaven. At length, perhaps, the ALMIGHTY visits us with some real grievance, on account of these our unreasonable murmurings.

We have complained without cause; and we now fall into real trouble. To the Israelites, when they murmured on account of the lightness of their bread, God sent fiery serpents.—To us, when we complain of the common blessings of our lot, He sends some bitter calamity, perhaps a fierce disease, the loss of some relative in whom we took delight, or a general reverse of circumstances. God often punishes men, by sending a real trouble, when they complain of that which ought to be no trouble. And the means, which discontented people take, to

better their condition, not seldom prove the occasion of the new calamity which overtakes them. The Israelites expected to have their food improved, by complaining of it to Moses. The light manna is not taken away ; but the plague of the fiery serpents is added.

Let us then, if we have imitated the Israelites in their sin, imitate them also in their acknowledgment of it ; for they came afterwards to Moses, and said, “ We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee : pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us.”

Of the manner in which Moses removed this plague, namely, by making a fiery serpent of brass, and setting it on a pole, that they, which were bitten, might look upon it, and be healed, we shall treat in the following verses of this chapter.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast determined the scene and the bounds of our existence ; and in Thy merciful Providence hast not made the wilderness our habitation, nor a barren land our dwelling place, grant us, we beseech Thee, the gift and grace of faith, that so we may always walk steadily in that path, which Thou hast assigned to us : and if, O LORD, Thou shalt call us into other circumstances of life, and shalt remove from us the temporal blessings which we now enjoy, and shalt

surround us with trials and difficulties and sufferings, grant, that we may never be rebellious or impatient under Thine hand, or grieved because of the way which Thou shalt set before us. May we chiefly desire to be taught and enabled by Thy grace to honour Thee in all our lives according to Thy will; and to recognise in all things the hand of our Father and our Friend:—knowing, that, if we truly love Thee, all things shall work together for good unto us: that Thou wilt convert our wilderness into paths of pleasantness and peace, and, instead of the briar, wilt bring forth the myrtle.

While we thus pray for the grace of a meek and cheerful submission to Thy holy will, whenever Thou shalt call us to enter into paths of affliction, we pray for the gift of the liveliest gratitude to Thee for the mercies which we now enjoy. We bless Thee, O GOD, for our birth in our own happy land; for the temporal circumstances, with which Thou hast surrounded us as individuals and as a family: and, above all, we bless Thee for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

Teach us, O GOD and FATHER, when we look at Thy mercies, to feel a deeper and deeper compunction for the sins which render us unworthy of the least of them: and, again, when we look at our sins, teach us to feel a livelier gratitude for the mercies by which Thou art even now calling us to repentance. Grant that the extent

and frequency of Thy blessings may never make us insensible of their value, or forgetful of Thee, the Giver, through whose continual care and watchful Providence, they are, still, mercifully preserved to us: but give to us—as the blessing above them all— hearts capable of valuing them aright, and of looking up through all, to Thee.

In the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, our only hope and trust, and in His own blessed words, we desire to close our prayers:

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXI.

NUMBERS, XXI. 7—9.

7 They repenting are healed by a brasen serpent.

7 ¶ THEREFORE the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

COMMENTARY.

THIS passage, which represents Moses as making a brazen serpent, and setting it on a pole, in order that the Israelites might, by looking upon it, be healed of their diseases, is very remarkable and instructive, and we shall therefore dwell upon it.

That such should be the remedy of their diseases appears at first view most improbable. “Is then a mere look,” a sick Israelite might say, “to recover me to health? I will first apply healing oil, or some medicine already known, to the wound; I will take advice from the men who are skilled in human disorders, and are in reputation for working cures.” But a sick and dying Israelite, who should have tried these means in vain, would perhaps be disposed to cast a look on the brazen serpent; and if he looked, he would be healed. And why did this wonderful effect follow? Because GOD ordained that it should follow,—because the brazen serpent was GOD’S appointed means. All means are effectual, only because GOD makes them so: and they are effectual, only so far as He pleases. GOD works by means: but sometimes by means which appear to a common eye extremely disproportionate to the end: and thus the Divine power is more signally manifested.

It is therefore the part of man to obey; to use, that is to say, the means which heavenly wisdom hath appointed, and not to follow his own inventions. While he is acting thus, GOD will add His blessing.

In order more particularly to apply this story, we must call to our recollection what is said upon it in the New Testament. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so,” says our SAVIOUR, “must the Son of man be lifted up;

that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life*.” Here then we see a type or representation of CHRIST. CHRIST was lifted up on a cross, as this serpent was on a pole; and CHRIST was lifted up for the healing of the nations. It was doubtless also, in reference to this passage, that our SAVIOUR said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me †.” But who are they who may be thus said to look to CHRIST? It may be answered, They, and they only, who feel themselves to be sick and dying: they, who feel, that they are sinful, and perishing through sin. We must first know that we are sinners; for “they, that be whole, need not a physician; but they, that are sick ‡.”

Many there are, who, though called Christians, do not feel that they are sinners; they know not in how great need they stand of mercy and pardon; they do not understand, that they are utterly lost without a SAVIOUR; they scarcely know, why He entered into the world; and they would have lived much as they now live, if He had never come to save them. If the scene in Judea had not happened, if CHRIST never had been born, if the Scriptures had not been written, if the Son of man had not been lifted up upon the cross, it would have made no difference to them. They live, as they would have lived; they act,

* St. John, iii. 14, 15.

† St. John, xii. 32.

‡ St. Matt. ix. 12.

and talk, and form their judgement on all subjects ; much as they would have done, if none of these astonishing events had taken place.

But do such persons believe in CHRIST? They may say that they do ; but they believe Him not. Let such persons remember, that, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of man been lifted up ; and that whosoever believeth in Him (let them mark those important words), whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The expression also implies, that whosoever believeth not in Him shall not have everlasting life ; for, as the Scripture says in another place, “ He, that believeth on the SON, hath everlasting life : and he, that believeth not the SON, shall not see life ; but the wrath of GOD abideth on him*.”

Consider then the meaning of this story. The brazen serpent was lifted up ; and was lifted up on high, as a striking object to the people ; in order that every sick Israelite might look on it and live. All the Israelites, who were sick, and who did not look on the brazen serpent, died ; and all, who did look on it, lived. So it is now. CHRIST is lifted up : He is crucified : and all, who believe on Him, live ; but all, who do not believe on Him, die. “ I,” saith our SAVIOUR, “ am the Resurrection and the Life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live†.”

* St. John, iii. 36.

† St. John, xi. 25.

There is a healing power in the view of the death of CHRIST, like that which accompanied the view of the brazen serpent. CHRIST is an object as little interesting to some persons, as a brazen serpent could be to an Israelite, who desired no cure. It is folly (perhaps they think) to expect, that our sins will yield to a cure of this kind; but “the foolishness of GOD is wiser than men; and the weakness of GOD is stronger than men*.” “We preach CHRIST crucified,” said the Apostle, —“unto the Jews, a stumbling block; and unto the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them, which are called, both Jews and Greeks, CHRIST the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD†.” The view of CHRIST crucified is the most powerful means, with which GOD ever supplied man, for the conquest of his sins. While we consider CHRIST dying on the cross for us; while we are looking to Him with a lively faith; we find our temptations weakened, and our inclination to sin abated; we feel gratitude to GOD for this unspeakable gift; the world lessens in our esteem; and our hearts ascend to heaven after our crucified SAVIOUR. Those fears which constitute one great hinderance to our improvement, at the same time, abate. We no longer carry about a burdened conscience, and a reluctant will; but are made ready for every good work; in short, we live not

* 1 Cor. i. 25.

† 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

henceforth unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for us*.

It might easily also be shewn, how patience under sufferings, meekness under provocations, a disposition to return good for evil, and a variety of other tempers the most difficult to be attained, are all to be acquired by looking to the cross of CHRIST. Let it also be remembered, that, by thus looking unto Him, we become interested in the Divine promises; we are accepted, and, in this sense, saved. Our faith is counted to us for righteousness. By grace are we saved through faith. And thus believing, we shall not perish; but have everlasting life.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast given Thine only begotten Son to die for our sins, that so we might not perish, but have everlasting life, grant us faith, we beseech Thee, to believe unfeignedly in His blessed sacrifice of Himself; that so we may obtain all those promises which are made, through Him, to the children of men.

We acknowledge, that we are all sinful, and corrupt: our lives have been stained by many sins; and our hearts, O LORD, are evil. We have loved that, which we should have hated; and we have often hated that, which we should have loved. We

* 2 Cor. v. 15.

have not loved Thy worship, or Thy service: we do not delight in obedience to Thy laws; but we have loved, and followed our own wills; and have chosen those paths, which have led us far astray from Thee. O LORD, we confess the corruption of our nature: we are children of fallen Adam: our first parent was led by the tempter into sin; and we have followed him in an evil course; and are altogether become sinful before Thee. We acknowledge also that we are unable to help ourselves: for our offences have obtained strong possession of us; and no human arm, O LORD, can save us.

To Thy mercies in CHRIST do we owe every hope of our deliverance. To Thee, therefore, who, in Him, reconcilest the world unto Thyself, not imputing our trespasses unto us, to Thee do we pray for pardon, and for peace. To the cross of that Saviour, whom, though crucified in weakness, Thou hast raised in power, and exalted at Thine own right hand, do we look for our salvation. O LORD, save us for His sake: send down Thy Spirit to sanctify us: cleanse us from our sins by His atoning blood; and purify each of our hearts, by faith in His name, from all the evil tempers and dispositions, which naturally dwell there.

May we find the Gospel of our Saviour to be effectual, by the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit, to change our nature, and to heal our souls. May we find our temptations weakened by it; our

sins subdued; and our doubts and difficulties removed. May we find our hearts also enlarged in love to GOD and man; and may we be made ready for every good work.

O LORD, deliver us, we pray Thee, from a false faith, which is barren, and unfruitful; and by which we do but the more miserably deceive our own souls. May we become dead with CHRIST to the things of this world; and alive to that glory, which shall hereafter be revealed. May we become indifferent, as He was, to praise, and to honour, and to all earthly glory: and may we desire to do the will of our heavenly Father; taking up our cross, and following CHRIST, and being conformed to the excellency of His example. And grant, O LORD, that, by thus looking unto JESUS, we may be enabled to pursue with patience our Christian course: and may we be transformed also into the same likeness, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the LORD.

Be with us now this day, we beseech Thee: and ever keep alive in us our faith in CHRIST. May we often think of Him, who was lifted upon the cross for our sins; and may we, through Thy grace, crucify all our corrupt imaginations and will.

These prayers we offer up in the name of JESUS, our REDEEMER; and conclude them in His own holy words:

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXII.

NUMBERS, XXII.

1 *Balak's first message for Balaam is refused. 15 His second message obtaineth him. 22 An angel would have slain him, if his ass had not saved him. 36 Balak entertaineth him.*

AND the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan *by* Jericho.

2 ¶ And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they *were* many : and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all *that are* round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor *was* king of the Moabites at that time.

5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which *is* by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there

is a people come out from Egypt : behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me :

6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people ; for they *are* too mighty for me : peradventure I shall prevail, *that* we may smite them, and *that* I may drive them out of the land : for I wot that he whom thou blessest *is* blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand ; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

8 And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me : and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men *are* these with thee ?

10 And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, *saying*,

11 Behold, *there is* a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth : come now, curse me them ; peradventure I

shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed.

13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

15 ¶ And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:

17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, *and* go with them ; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

22 ¶ And God's anger was kindled because he went : and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him.

23 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand : and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field : and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

24 But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall *being* on this side, and a wall on that side.

25 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and

crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where *was* no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

30 And the ass said unto Balaam, *Am* not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since *I was* thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

32 And the angel of the LORD said unto

him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because *thy* way is perverse before me :

33 And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times : unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned ; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me : now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men : but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

36 ¶ And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which *is* in the border of Arnon, which *is* in the utmost coast.

37 And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?

38 And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am

come unto thee : have I now any power at all to say any thing ? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth.

40 And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that *were* with him.

41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost *part* of the people.

COMMENTARY.

BALAK was a worldly king, who, possessing great power and riches, imagined, that, by these, he could prevail over the armies of Israel, and overthrow the cause of GOD. Determining to act a prudent and crafty part, he sends for Balaam, in whom he trusted, and requests him, while the Israelites were yet at a distance, to curse that people, for him. He afterwards makes to Balaam great promises of wealth, sending to him princes, more and more honourable than the first, in order to induce him to comply.

Balaam is restrained from obeying Balak, by the invisible power of GOD. He wishes to do, as he is desired, for he “loved the wages of unrighteous-

ness*;" but GOD controls the very words of his mouth; and Balaam, therefore, making a virtue of necessity, proceeds to say, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my GOD, to do less or more." This was pious language — but pious language may proceed from a corrupted heart; and the words, which immediately follow, indicate that the heart of this man was unsound; for Balaam immediately subjoins, "Now, therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more." But had not GOD sufficiently instructed him already? GOD had expressly said, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed." Balaam was guilty of sin, in questioning what was the will of GOD; when that will had been thus clearly made known. He thought, that, by procrastinating for another night, he might possibly obtain leave to please Balak, and to possess the wages of his unrighteousness. He made indeed a religious excuse. He desired them to tarry this night also, in order that he might know what the LORD would say unto him more. But could that waiting for the will of GOD be the waiting of faith? Far from it: there would evidently be a leaning of the mind to the side of Balak, and a disinclination to follow the will of GOD: and therefore GOD was angry with Balaam.

* 2 St. Peter, ii. 15.

So it is often now. We wish to do something, which GOD forbids; or to omit something, which He has plainly commanded. We profess that we wish to know what GOD would have us to do; for we have learnt, like Balaam, a religious mode of speaking, though our hearts love the world, or follow after covetousness. Possibly we say, that we will wait on GOD, and are not yet persuaded what is His will concerning us. How many pretend, like Balaam, that they do not see their way, when GOD has already made it plain. Like Balaam, they do not wish to execute the work which Providence assigns them; and therefore, they see a thousand difficulties. To doubt, in such cases, is to disbelieve. That instability, which men betray when the plainest duties are set before them, bespeaks the infidelity of their hearts. Let such men learn from the example of Balaam, that to wait, and even to pray, for the further direction of Providence, may be a mere cloak for their sin. Covetousness dictated the prayer of Balaam; and covetousness, or ambition, or indolence, or some other sinful motive, may dictate to us that seemingly religious excuse which we make. GOD may perhaps leave us to go after the way of our own heart. We may proceed, as Balaam did, imagining that we have obtained leave from GOD to pursue the course which we take, when in truth we have it not, and when we are totally without His blessing.

GOD, it is said, rebuked Balaam's madness by

means of the dumb ass, who was stopped by an angel with a drawn sword, which the ass saw, while the prophet did not discern it. Thus even a brute animal is made to reprove a prophet. He still drives the ass forward, being determined to pursue his own way, and bent on disobedience. At length, Balaam, utterly unable to advance, repents of what he is doing. He repents, indeed, merely from necessity. So do many now. They have seasons of repentance, as Balaam had. When they have entered on a sin which they find it impossible to perpetrate, they repent of the steps so unprofitably taken; they repent of the sin, because they have derived no profit from it; and can no longer prosecute their evil purpose. Being compelled, like Balaam, by an invincible necessity to turn back, they, like him, turn back with shame. The angel at length allows Balaam to proceed; but on this condition, that "only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that shalt thou speak."

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art righteous in all Thy ways, and holy in all Thy works, and whose law is perfect; we desire to acknowledge, with just contrition, that we are inexcuseable in our transgressions before Thee; every day of our lives, we have disobeyed Thy will, through the corruption of our hearts; and we have taken counsel, not

from Thee, but from our own deceitful imaginations. We lament, O LORD, the perverseness of our minds, which has led us continually to prefer our own will, to Thy will : and we lament also that exceeding deceitfulness of our own hearts, whereby we so disguise sin from ourselves, and pursue our own inclinations, even when we pretend to wait upon Thee, and to ask Thy will concerning us. O LORD, we pray for a single heart, and for a right mind : we pray for a holy indifference about the worldly lot, to which Thou mayest call us : and while we pray unto Thee for Thy direction, we pray, likewise, for grace to receive readily all the truths, and all the precepts, and commandments, which Thou givest us in Thy Holy Scriptures. O let us not turn aside from Thy plain and written word : let us not pretend submission to Thy teaching, while we lean to our own understandings. To this end, O GOD, we beseech Thee to purify our hearts from every sin. Take from us all covetousness, which may make us love the wages of unrighteousness ; and which may lead us into a wrong path. Purify us from every other sin ; from pride, and vanity ; from the love of idleness, and of ease, and of self-indulgence ; from anger, and passion ; from all evil tempers, which rise up in us : and, especially, do Thou deliver each of us from our own most easily besetting sin, and from our most frequent iniquity. O let our eye be single ; and then shall our whole body be full of

light. Let our heart be resolved on serving Thee ; and not on pleasing ourselves : and then shall we be always ready to obey all Thy commandments.

O LORD, discover to us, more and more, we beseech Thee, the corruption of our nature, and the falsehood of all those pretences, whereby we hide our guilt from ourselves, and harden our hearts, in any ways which are sinful and unholy. Grant us such a measure of Thy Grace that we may never choose a religion which is agreeable to our own passions, and dispositions, and humours, and which consists in words, and not in deeds ; but may we deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily, and follow CHRIST. O may we fear, and tremble, lest, at the Last Day, we should be found amongst those, who have said unto CHRIST, "LORD, LORD," but have not done the things which He has commanded. O save us from the portion of the hypocrite, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Keep us, O LORD, this day in all our ways. Preserve us from every snare. May we indeed, do Thy will ; may we love Thee, with all our hearts ; and may we be ready to every good work.

These prayers we offer in the name, and beseech Thee to hear them for the sake, of JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXIII.

NUMBERS, XXIII. & XXIV.

1. 13. 28 *Balak's sacrifice.* 7. 18 *Balaam's parable.* —
XXIV. 1 *Balaam, leaving divinations, prophesieth the happiness of Israel.* 10 *Balak in anger dismisseth him.* 15 *He prophesieth of the Star of Jacob, and the destruction of some nations.*

AND Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.

2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on *every* altar a bullock and a ram.

3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever He sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.

4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto Him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon *every* altar a bullock and a ram.

5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, *saying*, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, *whom* the LORD hath not defied?

9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

10 Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth *part* of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed *them* altogether.

12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I

pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

14 ¶ And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on *every* altar.

15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet *the LORD* yonder.

16 And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken?

18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

19 God *is* not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do *it*? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

20 Behold, I have received *commandment* to bless : and He hath blessed ; and I cannot reverse it.

21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel : the LORD his God *is* with him, and the shout of a king *is* among them.

22 God brought them out of Egypt ; He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

23 Surely *there is* no enchantment against Jacob, neither *is there* any divination against Israel : according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought !

24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion : he shall not lie down until he eat *of* the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

25 ¶ And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do ?

27 ¶ And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place ; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.

28 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon.

29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.

30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on *every* altar.

XXIV. 1 AND when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding *in his tents* according to their tribes ; and the spirit of God came upon him.

3 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said :

4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open :

5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, *and* thy tabernacles, O Israel !

6 As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of

lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, *and* as cedar trees beside the waters.

7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed *shall be* in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

8 God brought him forth out of Egypt ; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn : he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce *them* through with his arrows.

9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion : who shall stir him up ? Blessed *is* he that blesseth thee, and cursed *is* he that curseth thee.

10 ¶ And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together : and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed *them* these three times.

11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place : I thought to promote thee unto great honour ; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.

12 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,

13 If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do *either* good or bad of mine own mind ; *but* what the LORD saith, that will I speak ?

14 And now, behold, I go unto my people : come, *therefore*, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

15 ¶ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said :

16 He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, *which* saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open :

17 I shall see him, but not now : I shall behold him, but not nigh : there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

18 And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies ; and Israel shall do valiantly.

19 Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

20 ¶ And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek *was* the first of the nations; but his latter end *shall be* that he perish for ever.

21 And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.

22 Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.

23 And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!

24 And ships *shall come* from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.

25 And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.

COMMENTARY.

THESE chapters exhibit the same spirit in Balaam, as the former. He still wishes to curse Israel, and thus to obtain the presents offered by Balak; but GOD still restrains him. Balaam then hopes to prevail with GOD by offering ceremonial worship. Both he and the king proceed to pay unto GOD, as they think, great honour; for Balak, at the command of Balaam, builds unto the LORD seven

altars. The Israelites had but one altar; but where true religion builds one, there superstition is ready to erect seven altars to the LORD. Do none of us resemble Balaam and Balak in this respect? Do we never hope to please GOD by much bodily service? Do we not imagine, for example, that by repairing often and punctually to the place of divine worship, we shall obtain the favour of the GOD of Israel, though we neglect some other plain duty, refuse obedience to some other divine command, or indulge, like Balaam, some covetous temper, or pay court like him to some Balak, to some worldly person in power, because we think that he will render us some worldly service? Have we never carried with us to the altar a worldly, covetous, or divided heart, a heart cleaving to some temporal object, which we covet, while we are at our very prayers? Balaam doubtless thought of the promised gifts of Balak, even while he was in the midst of the seven altars.

These altars being prepared, Balak again called to Balaam, and said, "Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel." But "how," replies Balaam, "shall I curse, whom GOD hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?" The very words of Balaam were put into his mouth by GOD, exactly as the angel had foretold. Thus the wicked prophet is made to utter a true saying: and GOD announces through him, as His instrument, many future events; for the

LORD can use even His enemies, to fulfil His purpose. Let no one take credit, for either speaking or acting, according to the will of GOD, unless he speaks and acts from the heart. Let no one satisfy himself with performing even a right thing, merely by constraint. GOD so constrains many men in our days, that they cannot do the evil to which they incline. He compels them, by the circumstances which He sends, to do the thing which they ought to perform; and yet their heart is not in the work. Balaam blessed Israel, and refused to curse them, though commanded by this powerful monarch — a conduct, which, if it had proceeded from the true fear of GOD, would have been a noble proof of courage in the prophet. But this action failed of its reward. It had no virtue in it; inasmuch as it was done by constraint. Balaam wished not to utter the words, which he did utter. He would have spoken otherwise, if he could. We often do a right thing, but do it unwillingly: we merely yield to some necessity laid upon us. GOD will no more be pleased with us for such acts, than He was with Balaam. GOD will even punish us; because, though the act be right, the motive is wrong, and the heart is in a sinful state.

It is remarkable, that Balaam not only blesses Israel, and prophesies of their future greatness, but proceeds to add, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” Even wicked Balaam uttered these words. And who

indeed (whatever his life may be) does not desire that his death at least may be like that of the righteous? But let no man deceive himself with a barren wish of this sort. It is not sufficient to desire to die the death of the righteous. Would we die his death, we must live his life. Balaam, in his advancing years, could not think of the privileges and blessings vouchsafed to the true Israelite, without a wish to share in them. He longed to resemble in his last end those from whom he had antecedently differed; and many a sinner, when he sees the blessedness of the servants of God, when he observes the unquestionable excellency of their lives, and then meditates on their joyful death also, is led to exclaim—"Oh, that I might be like them in their last hours!" Let us not satisfy ourselves with this, or with any other resemblance to Balaam. Let us fear to have a heart exercised, as his was, in covetous practices. Let us look well to the passions, which reign within us. Let us pray to God to cleanse us from all iniquity; to save us from a double mind; and to make us sound in all His statutes and commandments.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who art a Spirit, and who requirest, that they, who worship Thee, should worship Thee in spirit and in truth, give us grace, we beseech Thee, to approach Thee, at this time, with a true heart; not mocking Thee with words of prayer, but, in our hearts, desiring those things, for which, with our lips, we offer up our supplications.

O LORD, we pray for minds disposed to do Thy will. We pray to be delivered from following our own way; and from choosing, even in our most secret thought, any thing, which Thou hast forbidden. We pray, that we may have grace to perceive, that all Thy commandments are good: and that it is our happiness, as it is our safety, to obey them.

May we take counsel, O LORD, not from our own hearts, nor from our own imaginations; but from Thy most pure and holy laws. We confess, that we are prone to deceive ourselves, with a false shew of goodness; and, in our minds to oppose Thy sovereign will, even when we are, in form, doing the thing which Thou commandest. We are often restrained, by many outward causes, from the sin which is in our desires. We are overruled by those, whom Thy Providence hath placed over us. We are often led, by many selfish motives,

even into the good things, which we do ; while we have often, in the course of Thy Providence, been hindered from doing much of that evil, which our own minds had purposed. We thank Thee, O LORD, for that restraining grace, if thus, in any instance, we have been kept from committing an act of sin against Thee ; while, at the same time, we lament the irregularity of our thoughts and wishes. We thank Thee for the parents whom Thou gavest to us ; for the wholesome dread of punishment even in this world which Thou hast often laid upon us ; for the hinderance which Thou hast many times placed in our way, when, with a high hand, we were about to trespass against Thee. Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, be the praise, that we have, in any single case, been kept from grievous sins. We have much to repent of, in our motives and inward wishes ; even when our conduct has seemed, in the eyes of our fellow-creatures, to be most right and honourable.

To Thee, therefore, do we lift up our prayer ; beseeching Thee to search our hearts ; and to help us to examine all the secret thoughts, which have been within us. O that we might love Thee : and put our whole trust in Thee ; and not in any outward circumstances, or in any child of man : but that we may do Thy will, O LORD, in truth : and thus, being submissive, and humble, and patient, and self-denying, and diligent in duty, may we commit ourselves to Thee, in peace and com-

fort; throwing ourselves on Thy mercies in JESUS CHRIST.

O LORD, for His sake, pardon all our past sins: and teach us to understand our guilt; and to repent of it. May we be deeply humbled for all our hypocrisy, and vain religion; for all the false confidence, which we have placed in mere outward worship: and for having so often honoured Thee with our lips, while our hearts were far from Thee.

Keep us, this day, we beseech Thee: and may both the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart, be now, and ever, acceptable in Thy sight. May we indulge no evil tempers, or evil thoughts: may we waste no time: may we neglect no duty: and may we love each other, not in word only, but in deed and in truth: each of us preferring others to ourselves; and each of us walking in all goodness, and righteousness before Thee.

We offer up these our humble and imperfect supplications, in the name of our LORD and SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXIV.

NUMBERS, XXV.

1 *Israel at Shittim commit whoredom and idolatry. 6 Phinehas killeth Zimri and Cozbi. 10 God therefore giveth him an everlasting priesthood. 16 The Midianites are to be vexed.*

AND Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3 And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.

6 ¶ And, behold, one of the children of

Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping *before* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand ;

8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

10 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for My sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in My jealousy.

12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace :

13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

14 Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, *even* that was slain with the Midianitish woman, *was* Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.

15 And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain *was* Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he *was* head over a people, *and* of a chief house in Midian.

16 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them :

18 For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.

COMMENTARY.

How various were the sins of these Israelites! We have to contemplate sometimes their hardness of heart and unbelief; sometimes their murmuring and discontent; sometimes their cowardly disinclination to march forward and oppose their own enemies and the enemies of GOD. At one period, they wish to go back, in order that they may eat of the garlic and onions of Egypt; at another, they with one accord are guilty of open idolatry; making to themselves a golden calf, and falling down and worshipping it. Such were these children of Israel; and justly therefore was that generation shut out from the land of Canaan.

In this chapter, we read of another crime added to all the former. They are led astray by the daughters of Moab; and, as one sin is often followed by another, so in this case, they, having first connected themselves with these unbelieving women, proceed to make sacrifices to the false gods whom the women were accustomed to worship. "Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel."

While GOD is executing His wrath against Israel, and Moses is saying, "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor," and while all the congregation also are weeping over the judgements, of which they are both the instru-

ments and the witnesses—in the midst of this sorrowful and tremendous scene, one Israelite has the boldness to bring forth a Midianitish woman in the very sight of Moses and the people—but Phinehas, the priest, with a javelin in his hand runs after him, and slays both the man and the woman on the spot. Such was the end of these two partakers in iniquity, Zimri and Cozbi—and it may be remarked that sudden destruction often overtakes those, who, in like manner, harden themselves in vice. Zimri was prince of a chief house of Simeonites; and Cozbi was daughter of Zur, who was head of a people and of a principal family in Midian. Their rank and power could not save them in the day of the Divine visitation.

This chapter of the Old Testament is particularly referred to in some parts of the New. “Let us labour therefore,” says the Apostle, “to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief*.” Unbelief is the root of every sin. “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” Thus is the Old Testament quoted by the Apostle as a book which those, who live

* Heb. iv. 11.

under the Gospel, are to apply practically to themselves. We ought all to take warning from the sins of the ancient world; while, through patience and comfort of the same Scriptures, in which they were taught to believe, as well as through confidence in the truths revealed in the New Testament, we are to excel in faith, in holiness, and in every good work. Phinehas is celebrated in this chapter, even for the severe justice which he executed,—a severity, however, not resorted to without express command from God. “Behold I give unto him,” says the LORD, “my covenant of peace; and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God.” Blessed are they who have zeal for God; though the world may consider them on this account as far too strict. Sometimes, it is mercy to a multitude to execute a prompt and exemplary punishment; for thus only can the plague be stayed, and the baneful influence of the pernicious example be counteracted. It also is often of great importance to bring to light secret offenders. So Phinehas sought Zimri and Cozbi in their tent; and there executed the sentence of death upon them: and the day is coming, when God shall bring every secret work into judgement; when He shall judge the secrets of all hearts by that Man whom He hath ordained, and shall reward every one according to his works.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, we beseech Thee to hear the prayers, which we are met to offer up unto Thee; and to grant us such a sense of Thy presence, and such a true desire after all those blessings, which we ask, that we may indeed obtain Thy favour, through JESUS CHRIST, our blessed Mediator and Redeemer.

We pray Thee, O LORD, to be merciful to us, and to bless us, this day, delivering us from all our sins; and from every kind of evil. Keep alive in our souls, we beseech Thee, the remembrance of Thy name; that we may be tender in our consciences, and fearful of sinning against Thee. Make us watchful and circumspect: may we be guarded in every thing, which we do; habitually, and awfully impressed with a sense of Thy constant presence with us, and of Thy pure and holy Majesty. We pray Thee, O LORD, to keep us at the greatest distance from sin; by putting Thy Spirit within us, so that all our thoughts, as well as words and actions, may be undefiled and blameless in Thy sight.

We beseech Thee, O God, to sanctify unto us the reading of Thy sacred word. May the instances of Thy judgements deter us from sin; and may we be led to repentance by what we read of Thy long-suffering mercy. O LORD, teach us to

put away every evil thing far from us : and, when sinners entice us, do Thou strengthen us, that so we may never consent unto them.

May we of this family always remember, how holy is that Gospel which we profess : and how great are those obligations, under which Thou hast laid us, to renounce the world, the flesh, and the Devil. May we stand in awe, therefore ; and sin not. May we in all things watch, and be sober. May we take heed, lest, through our fault, the way of truth should be evil spoken of ; and may we never join ourselves to those, who neither know, nor love Thy law.

And pardon, O LORD, our too great conformity to the world in times past. Sanctify us, we pray Thee, that we may become followers of our crucified Master ; through whose mediation alone we hope to obtain forgiveness of our sins, and an abundant entrance into glory.

Hear us, O FATHER ALMIGHTY, in these our prayers : and shower down all Thy best blessings upon us, for the sake of our only Intercessor, JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXV.

DEUTERONOMY, VIII.

An exhortation to obedience in regard of God's dealing with them.

ALL the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no.

3 And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.

6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.

7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills ;

8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates ; a land of oil-olive, and honey ;

9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any *thing* in it ; a land whose stones *are* iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which He hath given thee.

11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgements, and His statutes, which I command thee this day :

12 Lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full,

and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein ;

13 And *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied ;

14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage ;

15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, *wherein were* fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where *there was* no water ; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint ;

16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end ;

17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth.

18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God : for *it is* He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.

19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget

the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

20 As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

COMMENTARY.

How extraordinary were the dealings of GOD towards the Israelites! What nation, as Moses justly said, was there so great, who had GOD so nigh to them, as the LORD their GOD was in all things, that they called on Him for? What nation had judgements and laws so good and righteous, mercies so numerous, or deliverances so extraordinary? Well might they be required to remember the LORD their GOD, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. It became them to be obedient, not only when the Divine hand was leading them through the wilderness, and dispensing mercies to them; but also to remember those mercies afterwards; to reflect on them, when they should have possession of the land of Canaan, that land of wheat, and of barley, and vines, and fig-trees, of oil-olive, and honey; where also they were to eat bread without scarceness, and to lack nothing;

where the very stones would serve them for iron, and from whose hills they might dig brass.

The object of this, and of many other chapters, in the beginning of Deuteronomy, is to establish a claim, on the part of GOD, for the permanent gratitude of the Israelites, when they should have reached the country, into which Moses had been so long leading them.

Let us turn this exhortation to our own use. We are all disposed not only to sin against GOD, at the time when He is exercising His goodness, but likewise to forget Him, when we have long enjoyed His successive mercies.

How many, after having in their adversity implored GOD to rescue them, have, when their prayers were heard, become unthankful, and even hardened, through their prosperity! How many, having in some special trouble called upon the LORD, have been delivered, and have then forgotten the Deliverer! Out of ten lepers, whom our Saviour healed of their disease, we read that one only returned to give glory to GOD. "Were there not ten cleansed?" said our Saviour, "but where are the nine?" It is still, as it were, but one in ten who is thankful for the mercies which he experiences. It is natural for men to fall into that sin, against which these Israelites were warned. When we have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses and dwell therein, and when our herds and our flocks multiply, and our

silver and our gold multiply, and all that we have is multiplied, then is our heart lifted up, and we forget the LORD our GOD, who brought us forth from the land of Egypt; who hath led us through the wilderness, where there was no water, and fed us with food from heaven: and we say, in our heart, "My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." Let each of us dread this unthankful and this self-complacent spirit; it is hateful to GOD, for it is He who giveth men power to get wealth: and the Scriptures have been written and handed down to us, for the purpose of shewing, that, if we forget the GOD of our mercies, then He will be wroth with us, as He was with the antient Israelites; and though He should not visit us in this world, yet, in the world to come, He will bring down punishment upon us, as surely as He did of old upon the unbelieving and sinful nations, whom He destroyed and cast out.

But let us advert also to our spiritual mercies. We are blessed, not only with bread to eat, and raiment to cover us, and with a house in which to dwell; but we have been also rescued out of a spiritual Egypt, out of a sinful and unbelieving world, and have been brought into a situation abounding with religious advantages, no less than Canaan abounded with springs of water, and with wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and honey, and oil-olive. We too easily forget these spiritual advantages. At least, we do not

sufficiently reflect, from how great evil we have been delivered. What mental miseries and troubles, what fierce temptations and fiery trials are there in the world. It is, in this sense, an evil world to a multitude of those who are passing through it. It is a barren wilderness, through that want of religion which many a traveller finds in it, through the absence of those streams of divine consolation, which alone can refresh the soul. Sin is the source of sorrows, and of troubles innumerable. What a mercy, therefore, is it to be brought into religious society, to be possessed of religious privileges, to have a day set apart for the worship of GOD, to have all the means of grace, to have the pure Gospel preached to us, to be invited to pray in the name of CHRIST, to have the Scriptures in our hand, and religious examples set before our eyes, and holy exhortations continually repeated to us. We grow unthankful for these things, when we have been accustomed to them. The Israelites, when they arrived in the land of Canaan, forgot the fiery serpents, which they had known in the wilderness, and the barren sands, which they had left. So do we forget the temptations and pains, which are in the world, and the spiritual barrenness of many quarters. Let us thank GOD for the advantages, both spiritual and temporal, which we enjoy. Let us evermore praise Him, who is the Author of all good; and shew forth our thankfulness, by living to His glory.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, we thank Thee for Thy various mercies, showered down on this family. We would bless, O LORD, that bountiful hand which supplieth our wants, and loadeth us, day by day, with so many benefits. O how unworthy are we, of the smallest of all Thy mercies! How little have we done either to procure or to deserve them! It is the LORD who hath been with us to guide us in all our ways, and to bring us into that comfortable station of life, which we now enjoy.

We pray, O LORD, that Thou wouldest vouchsafe unto us a believing and a thankful heart. Give us faith in Thyself, the Author of all our mercies; and give us also zeal, we beseech Thee, to devote the good things, which Thou givest us, to Thy glory. May our health and our strength be laid out in Thy service. Grant us grace that we may employ them not in pleasing the flesh, and in pursuing our own vain and sinful desires; but may we honour Thee in the use of them, and thus shew forth Thy praise. May our talents of every other kind be laid out in glorifying Thee, and in doing good to our fellow-creatures.

Deliver us, O LORD, from an idle, self-indulgent, and useless life, whereby we do but shew the ingratitude of our hearts, whatever the profession of

our lips may be. Deliver us from all disobedience to Thy will, from all iniquity and sin of every kind, from all bad tempers and wicked thoughts, which seek indulgence within us, from all pride and vanity, from all evil and inordinate desires, from all impatience and discontent, and from hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness. We pray Thee, O LORD, that we, remembering Thine unspeakable mercies to us, may be eager in all things to please Thee, our Heavenly Father, denying ourselves, and walking in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. If Thou sendest us, at any time, troubles and afflictions, grant, that we may not be impatient under them; but may bow submissively to Thy Sovereign will, and remember that Thou doest all things well. And if it please Thee to bless us with increasing abundance of the good things of this world, and with spiritual advantages also, O let not our prosperity, or our abundance, become a snare to us: but may we remember, from whose hand we have been favoured above others; and how it is the LORD alone, who hath caused us to dwell in comfort.

Take us, O LORD, this day, into Thy protection, and preserve us from all the temptations which are before us. Give us a strong faith in the mercies of our Redeemer; and fill us with love and gratitude to Him, for His own blessed sacrifice of Himself, that we might be saved from our iniquity.

Keep us mindful of Thee, thankful for all which we enjoy, and trusting Thee for all which is to come.

Hear us, we beseech Thee, for JESUS CHRIST our LORD and SAVIOUR's sake.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXVI.

DEUTERONOMY, XV.

1 *The seventh year a year of release for the poor. 7 It must be no let of lending or giving. 12 An Hebrew servant, 16 except he will not depart, must in the seventh year go forth free and well furnished. 19 All firstling males of the cattle are to be sanctified unto the Lord.*

At the end of *every* seven years thou shalt make a release.

2 And this *is* the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth *ought* unto his neighbour shall release *it*; he shall not exact *it* of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD's release.

3 Of a foreigner thou mayest exact *it again*: but *that* which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;

4 Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance to possess it:

5 Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do

all these commandments which I command thee this day.

6 For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as He promised thee : and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow ; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.

7 ¶ If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother :

8 But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth.

9 Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand ; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought ; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

10 Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him : because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.

11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land : therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

12 ¶ *And* if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years ; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

13 And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty :

14 Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press : *of that* wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto Him.

15 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee : therefore I command thee this thing to day.

16 And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee, because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee ;

17 Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust *it* through his ear unto the door, and he shall

be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise.

18 It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant *to thee*, in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

19 ¶ All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy GOD: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.

20 Thou shalt eat *it* before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household.

21 And if there be *any* blemish therein, *as if it be* lame, or blind, *or have* any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God.

22 Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean *person shall eat it* alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart.

23 Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

COMMENTARY.

MANY are the passages in the antient Scriptures, which shew that the religion of the Old and New Testament is the same. We have here some practical precepts, which remarkably resemble these of CHRIST. "Give," said our Saviour, "to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away*." And, in this chapter, it is said, "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth." To give and to lend are therefore made a positive duty, under both dispensations. "He, that hath pity upon the poor," says Solomon, "lendeth unto the LORD †." Our Saviour also warns us, that, when the Judgement Day shall come, one test, by which the character of men will be tried, will be the disposition, which they manifested, when in this world, to pay compassionate attention to the poor. "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye

* St. Matt. v. 42.

† Prov. xix. 17.

clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." * * * " And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal*."

A most remarkable degree of liberality is insisted on, in the chapter which we are now considering, and indeed in many other parts of Scripture. Every seventh year is here appointed to be a year of release, that is — a year, in which every Jewish debtor was to be released from his debt ; an institution in itself most merciful. A caution is also given not to forbear lending, on account of the near approach of this year of release, — a year, the arrival of which would make the debt irrecoverable ; so strongly was a narrow and selfish spirit forbidden, even under the Jewish dispensation. " Beware," it is said, " that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand ; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought ; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him : because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto."

How many men in these days lose that blessing of God, which still attends the exercise of charity.

* St. Matt. xxv. 42, 43. 46.

How many men, though they give, are not liberal in their gifts. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide," says the precept: but how many, though they open their hand, are far from opening it wide. Some plead, that they have little, and can therefore only give little. But even in that case you may bestow your time, your attention, your diligence; you may shew kindness, and sympathy; you may lend a compassionate ear to the tale of woe; you may plead the cause of the afflicted; you may exert your influence with those who are richer than yourself; you may also either give, or lend, some small thing out of your slender substance; and you may perform this little act, with a free and liberal heart. Many, who are far from poor, plead that their income is appropriated. But why is it thus engaged? May there not be a sin in the present system of employing it? Is it not a sin in a rich man so to form his plan of expenditure, as to leave little or nothing for the poor? Instead of opening his hand wide, he has deliberately resolved to prevent its being opened; in defiance of the precepts of that religion which he professes, and to the neglect even of natural humanity.

Let us take heed, that we be not convicted, on the Great Day, of having bestowed many a superfluity on ourselves; while the necessaries of life have been denied to some of those around us. Let us fear, lest part of that wealth, which God com-

mitted to us as His stewards, should have been found, at the Judgement Day, to have been basely diverted to the purpose of gratifying our own vanity, of indulging our own luxury, of satisfying our own vicious and expensive taste. We must deny ourselves, if we would do any material good to the poor. We must first form our plans economically; and then execute them conscientiously; if we would fulfil heartily the precepts of this chapter. Would we be liberal, we must be strict with ourselves. Diligence in our calling, and self-denial in our expenditure, will seldom fail to fill our purse; and out of that purse we may then bestow largely on the poor and needy. Let us then, as the Apostle says, work with our hands the thing which is good, that we “may have to give to him that needeth*.”

One other observation shall here be made. Some poor men appear to think, that, because a rich man is commanded to be free in lending and giving, a poor one may therefore be as free to borrow or to receive. Many, who lay claim to a religious character, are much too willing to be burdensome to their friends; and are little aware, that the Gospel, though it commands men to lend and give, by no means equally exhorts them to ask or to receive. A Christian should relieve others, and should endeavour seldom to need relief himself. “Thou

* Eph. iv. 28.

shalt lend," it is said in this chapter, "unto many nations ; but thou shalt not borrow." An expression chiefly perhaps prophetic of the prosperity of the Jews ; but worthy to be considered as also of a preceptive nature, and illustrative in some measure of that saying of CHRIST, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive*." May we be of this spirit. May we endeavour, if GOD's providence permit, to be lenders, not borrowers ; givers, and not receivers. May we shew our pre-eminence over an unbelieving world, after this manner : and in this sense, may it be said of us, as of the ancient Jews, "Thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee."

PRAYER.

O GOD, who hast made of one blood all the families of the earth, and hast commanded us to love one another, and hast taught us that all our doings — without charity — are nothing worth, grant us grace to love Thee above all things, and to love Thy creatures for Thy sake. Take from us, we beseech Thee, that selfishness which leads us to live so idly and uselessly as regards our neighbours, and so ungratefully as regards Thee ; and teach us to feel, that our highest duty and our highest interest are for ever one in Thy sight.

Teach us to consider, that we are responsible to

* Acts, xx. 35.

Thee for the use of the time, and the talents, and the substance, whether much or little, which Thou hast committed to our stewardship : and teach us to deny ourselves, that we may have to give to our poorer brethren ; remembering always that, without self-denial, there is no holiness before Thee, and no charity towards our neighbour. Grant, that we may not deceive ourselves in these prayers ; and, thereby, add to all our other sins the aggravated guilt of mocking Thee by a profession of truths which we not only do not practise, but do not even desire to practise. Enlighten us by Thy BLESSED SPIRIT, that we may apply Thy word to our consciences, and may follow its precepts in all godliness and in all charity ; hour by hour, living in Thy faith and fear and love.

Thou hast been very bountiful and long-suffering towards us ; teach us to be kind and liberal towards others ; and humble and grateful towards Thee. When we contrast Thy mercies with our misdeeds, grant us grace to be meekly contrite in Thy presence : and more and more watchful over ourselves, remembering, that of him to whom much is given shall much be required.

Thou has blest us as a family with peace and harmony among ourselves, and with a large measure of worldly comforts : may we be enabled by Thy grace to live to Thy glory ; and to extend — by our example and by our influence — the knowledge of Thy will.

Thou hast blest us as a nation, with pre-eminent advantages above other people: grant us grace to feel, that it has been from no merits of our own — that thou hast not made the wilderness our habitation; or a barren land, our dwelling-place; — and teach us to see, that all our honours, as a people, have been given by Thee; that Thou alone pullest down, and raisest up; that Thou exaltest whom Thou willest; and that — except in Thee — our utmost strength is weakness.

Thou hast blest us as a Church: and — while other nations have lingered in darkness, or have wandered astray, Thou hast visited us with the light of Thy truth; and hast given us Thy blessed word, and all Thy means of grace in the pure Church of which Thou hast called us to be members.

Grant, O GOD, that the extent of our blessings may not be the measure of our condemnation; but may we be timely wise; and see alike our guilt and our privileges; and turn at once from the sins which have defiled us in our several characters and stations; and may now and for ever serve Thee in newness of life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen and Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXVII.

DEUTERONOMY, XVI.

*The feast of the passover, 9 of weeks, 13 of tabernacles.
16 Every male must offer, as he is able, at these three feasts.
18 Of judges and justice. 21 Groves and images are forbidden.*

OBSERVE the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God : for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

2 Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place His name there.

3 Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it ; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, *even* the bread of affliction ; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste : that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.

4 And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days ; neither shall there *any thing* of the flesh,

which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.

5 Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

6 But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place His name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

7 And thou shalt roast and eat *it* in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose : and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents.

8 Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread : and on the seventh day *shall be* a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God : thou shalt do no work *therein*.

9 ¶ Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee : begin to number the seven weeks from *such time as* thou beginnest *to put* the sickle to the corn.

10 And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give *unto the LORD thy God*, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee :

11 And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place His name there.

12 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.

13 ¶ Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:

14 And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* within thy gates.

15 Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.

16 ¶ Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the

place which He shall choose ; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles : and they shall not appear before the LORD empty :

17 Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which He hath given thee.

18 ¶ Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes : and they shall judge the people with just judgement.

19 Thou shalt not wrest judgement ; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift : for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

21 ¶ Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee.

22 Neither shalt thou set thee up *any* image ; which the LORD thy God hateth.

COMMENTARY.

THERE is a remarkable similarity between the Old and the New Dispensation. The leading event in the history of the Jews, as recorded in the Old Testament, is their deliverance out of Egypt; and the duty here deduced is the commemoration of that event, a commemoration which was to be accompanied with a life of gratitude and obedience. The principal event in the history of the Church, as recorded in the Gospel, is the redemption of man from worse than Egyptian bondage,—by one greater than Moses, even JESUS CHRIST:—and it is our great duty to shew that we are grateful to our Redeemer, by commemorating His death, and by devoting our lives to His service. “Observe,” it is here said to the Jews, “the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto ;he LORD thy GOD: for, in the month of Abib, the LORD thy GOD brought thee forth out of Egypt, by night.” We Christians are commanded to keep, not the Passover, but the Supper of the LORD; which was instituted by Him—“This do, in remembrance of me,”—on the very night, on which He for the last time, in fulfilment of the precept in this chapter, ate the Passover with His disciples.

“Thou shalt keep,” it is also said, “the feast of weeks unto the LORD.” This was to commence from the time of beginning “to put the sickle to

the corn." "And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy GOD, with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy GOD, according as the LORD thy GOD hath blessed thee: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy GOD, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy GOD hath chosen to place His name there. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." By this additional institution, GOD makes a second demand upon His ancient people, for gratitude in proportion to the mercies which they had experienced.

This passage may somewhat literally be applied to us. The season, in which we begin to put the sickle to the corn, ought to excite our gratitude to the bountiful Author of every temporal blessing; and we should rejoice with a holy joy, not turning this period of returning plenty into an occasion of intemperance; but rather bestowing our tribute of a freewill offering to the poor, to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow; in order that their hearts also may rejoice: for "he, that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the LORD*." And it accord-

* Prov. xix. 17.

ingly was the practice of the first Christians, on the first day of every week, both to partake of the LORD'S Supper; and also to give to the poor, as the LORD had prospered them.

“Thou shalt observe,” it is also said, “the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine; and thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy GOD in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy GOD shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.” Here is a picture of true happiness—it is described as consisting not only in temporal abundance, but also in the pious celebration of it; in the exercise of kindness to the poor and needy, whom we ought to delight in making partakers in our prosperity; and, also, in the assurance of the continuance of that Divine favour, which has been already manifested to us. “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich; and He addeth no sorrow with it*.”

But the moral duties prescribed in this chapter are not limited to acts of kindness to the poor and needy. Justice is insisted on, as well as mercy.

* Prov. x. 22.

The judges and officers are required to judge the people with just judgement, throughout all the tribes of Israel. “Thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift : for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That, which is altogether just, shalt thou follow ; that thou mayest live, and inherit the land, which the LORD thy GOD giveth thee.” In vain do we profess heartfelt gratitude to GOD for the abundance of His goodness ; if we neglect any of His commandments. Our obedience must be universal, in order that it may be proved to be sincere. If we love GOD, we shall endeavour to keep His whole law.

Finally, the Israelites are commanded not to plant any groves of trees near the altar of the LORD. Groves were commonly planted in the places in which idolatry was practised : let us learn hence, that purity of worship must be combined with unreserved obedience.

In all these points, there is a similarity between the Law and the Gospel. Our dispensation indeed is far more spiritual than the Jewish ; and therefore our gratitude should be not so much for our corn and wine ; not for our rescue from temporal bondage ; but for the riches of the Divine mercy in JESUS CHRIST : and our confidence in GOD should be a confidence, that He will not only bless us in the labours of our hand, and continue to us our temporal prosperity ; but that, having begun a

good work within us, He will perform it unto the Day of the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST ; that He will carry us through life, and through death, and will establish us at length in the heavenly Canaan ; in that land of life and peace, where we are told “ Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself ; for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended *.”

PRAYER.

O LORD, who didst appoint to Thine antient people divers rites and ordinances, some in commemoration of mercies already received, some in acknowledgment of blessings at that time descending upon them, and some as types and figures of good things yet to come, give us grace to read Thy holy word with devout attention, and to draw the lessons, which Thou hast appointed, from every part of Thine own Blessed Book. Enable us to feel that all is given by inspiration of GOD ; and that all is profitable to those, who, by prayer and in patience, wait for Thy teaching.

Teach us, then, O LORD, always to remember, that we also, like those whom Thou leddest forth from Egypt, are strangers and pilgrims, passing on to a better country, even an heavenly : strengthen

* Isaiah, lx. 20.

us for the journey of life before us ; that we faint not at its terrors, and yield not to its snares ; — grant, that we may ever gratefully enjoy its blessings — and, whether we eat or drink, may we do all to Thy glory. And teach us daily to take up our cross, and follow the LORD. And enable us constantly to bear in mind all that HE did and suffered for us ; and to rejoice in every opportunity — which our age and circumstances may admit — of commemorating His precious Death, and of receiving the spiritual food and sustenance which HE has provided for us in His Holy Supper.

And grant us grace to feel, that Thou art the Author not only of all spiritual life, but also of the daily and hourly supplies of our bodily nature ; and that, if Thou withholdest Thine hand, we perish. We beseech Thee to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them ; and grant, that we, receiving Thy bountiful liberality, may use the same to Thy glory, to the relief of those who are needy, and to our own comfort ; — so that our temporal abundance may be always accompanied by the pious and grateful use of it : and by the humble acknowledgment, that it is not our own merit, which hath caused us to differ from the poorest in the land, but the free bounties of Thy good Providence.

Enable us — more especially in the sight of this

truth—to do unto all men, as we would wish them to do unto us; and grant us grace to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Thee, O LORD our GOD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXVIII.

DEUTERONOMY, XVII.

- 1 *The things sacrificed must be sound.* 2 *Idolaters must be slain.*
 8 *Hard controversies are to be determined by the priests and judges.* 12 *The contemner of that determination must die.*
 14 *The election, 16 and duty of a king.*

THOU shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God *any* bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, *or any* evil favouredness; for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

2 ¶ If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing His covenant,

3 And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;

4 And it be told thee, and thou hast heard *of it*, and enquired diligently, and, behold, *it be true, and the thing certain, that* such abomination is wrought in Israel:

5 Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, *even* that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.

6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

7 The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

8 ¶ If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgement, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, between stroke and stroke, *being* matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose;

9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgement:

10 And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou

shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee :

11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgement which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do : thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, *to* the right hand, nor *to* the left.

12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die : and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.

13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

14 ¶ When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me ;

15 Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose : *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee : thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites:

19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

COMMENTARY.

To maintain the purity of the Divine worship was one of the great objects of the laws given to the Jews. The sacrifices offered by them were to be perfect; even the smallest blemish in the bullock or the sheep being declared to be an abomination to the LORD. How pure then ought also to be our worship, and how great our care not to present unto GOD the mere remnant of our time, the last dregs of our life, or a few only of our scattered and wandering thoughts, lest these also should prove an abomination in His sight.

The objects of Divine honour among the heathen were various. Some bowed down to the work of their own hands; some, to living animals; some deified departed heroes, or legislators, who had been the benefactors of mankind; while others, (less guilty perhaps than those gross idolaters, who made to themselves gods of wood and stone,) adored the great luminaries of heaven, undoubtedly the most glorious, to the eye, of all the works of GOD. The Persians, in particular, are said to have been of this class. Nevertheless the prohibition is here distinctly extended to those, who should worship either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven: and the Jew who should be found guilty, even of this sin, was required by the Levitical law to be put to death. So

jealous was GOD of His own honour ; and so hateful to Him is idolatry of every class.

The subjects treated of in this chapter, as well as in many others of Deuteronomy, are various ; but there is a unity of plan in the whole book. The great purpose of it is to give laws, in the name of GOD himself, to the Jews ; laws regulating their worship, prescribing the mode of exercising justice, and directing them in a great variety of concerns : and the Divine authority was to be upheld in all the particulars which were commanded. In case of any difficulty arising in the administration of justice, resort was to be had to the Levites and the Judges, who were the representatives of GOD : and from their decision in these hard cases no one was to deviate, either to the right or the left. In the event of their setting a king over them, like the other nations of the earth, they were required not to take a stranger from the surrounding nations, who doubtless might be inclined to idolatry, but one of their own people, and one, it is also said, whom the LORD their GOD should choose.

Further it was required of this king, that he should not multiply to himself horses, or wives, or silver, or gold, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he might there multiply horses ; but that when he should sit upon the throne of his kingdom, he should write a copy of this law, from that book which was already in the

hand of the Priests and Levites, that so he might read therein all the days of his life, and learn to fear the LORD his GOD, and keep His statutes, not having his heart lifted up above his fellows, to the end that he might prolong his days in his kingdom ; he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Kings and great men may learn hence, that there is One higher than they : and the rich, however independent their circumstances, may be reminded, that they are under the law to CHRIST. GOD is governor of the whole earth. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. His laws bind both high and low ; He has no respect of persons ; and it is a part of the very office of all, who are placed in authority, to execute the laws of God ; the laws, we mean, of truth, and universal righteousness. They are GOD's ministers attending on this very thing ; and he, that " resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of GOD *." Let it, however, be never forgotten, on the other hand, that they, who are in authority over their fellow-creatures, are under subjection to GOD ; that they are bound to conduct themselves with modestly and humility, not being lifted up above their brethren ; and that they must hereafter give up their account, before an assembled world, to Him who is the Judge of quick and dead.

* Rom. xiii. 2.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who didst forbid Thine ancient people to offer to Thee any blemished victim; and didst require that each oblation should — in its measure — be perfect, enable us — for Thou only canst — to present unto Thee this our daily sacrifice of prayer and praise and thanksgiving, blamelessly and acceptably before Thee, in the name of our only Mediator and Intercessor, JESUS CHRIST, Thy blessed Son our Lord. Save us from all wandering thoughts, from all presumptuous imaginations, and from all self-righteousness. Put into our hearts good desires; and enable us to worship Thee with awful reverence, with godly fear, yet with filial love and with childlike confidence: always approaching Thee as our reconciled Father and Friend, yet always as the LORD ALMIGHTY; and never presuming to offer to Thee the dregs of the day, or the dregs of life; but rendering to Thee, through Thine own blessed influences, minds freshly alive to the duty which we profess to perform, and hearts earnest, holy, grateful, and devoted.

For Thou art a jealous GOD; and hast taught us by the punishments which Thou didst denounce against idolatry, that Thou wilt not give Thine honour to another, or suffer any worship of man's choosing to be joined with that which Thou hast prescribed. Whilst, then, Thy gracious Providence

hath removed far from us the temptations — common in other times and other countries — to grosser corruptions in worship, teach us more deeply to feel the duty of drawing near to Thee in spiritual homage. Enlighten us, that we may see and know Thy presence continually ; and strengthen us that we may avoid all which may lead our hearts from Thee : and grant us grace, also, to renounce those friendships with the ungodly, which may make us partakers of their sins.

And — in order that our understandings and affections may alike be directed aright — teach us, we beseech Thee, a holy reverence for the Book in which Thou hast recorded Thy will and the sentence by which Thou wilt hereafter judge the world. Thou hast given to us line upon line, and precept upon precept ; and hast shewn us what Thou requirest of us, and what — by Thy Holy Spirit — Thou wilt enable us to perform. Incline us to read Thy word with diligent and devout attention : and — while we search Thy Scriptures daily — guide us into all needful truth ; and keep us ever watchful of the solemn account, which, of these and all other opportunities of knowledge and useful action, we must, every one of us, one day render, whether we are high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, according to the several talents which Thou hast committed to us.

Teach us also, O LORD, to shew a just obedience to the spiritual pastors and masters whom

Thou hast set over us: to honour them who watch for our souls ; and to respect all Thine ordinances. Enlighten us, that we may feel the value of the privilege which we enjoy as members of that pure and reformed branch of Thy Church, established in our own land ; and incline us ever to watch and pray for its prosperity and increase.

Every blessing for ourselves as individuals and as a family, for the nation and for the Church, — we ask in the name of our only Mediator, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

LXXIX.

DEUTERONOMY, XVIII.

1 *The Lord is the priests' and Levites' inheritance.* 3 *The priest's due.* 6 *The Levite's portion.* 9 *The abominations of the nations are to be avoided.* 15 *Christ the prophet is to be heard.* 20 *The presumptuous prophet is to die.*

THE priests the Levites, *and* all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and His inheritance.

2 Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD *is* their inheritance, as He hath said unto them.

3 ¶ And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether *it be* ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

4 The firstfruit *also* of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

5 For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in

the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever.

6 ¶ And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose ;

7 Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites *do*, which stand there before the LORD.

8 They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

9 ¶ When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

10 There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.

11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12 For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD : and because of

these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

13 Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

14 For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so *to do*.

15 ¶ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken that* which they have spoken.

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto My words which

he shall speak in My name, I will require *it* of him.

20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?

22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

COMMENTARY.

IN the former verses of this chapter provision is made for the separate maintenance of the Levites. They were to have no part nor inheritance with Israel, for the LORD was their inheritance: but they were to share in the sacrifices, which were offered; as well as to enjoy those tythes, which had been previously allotted them. The Apostle, in full agreement with the principle here laid down, claims, on behalf of preachers under the

Gospel, a full right to a sufficient maintenance. "Do ye not know," saith he, "that they, which minister about holy things, live of the things of the Temple? and they, which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the LORD ordained, that they, which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel*." The Apostle extends this right, so far as to claim both for himself, and for all other Christian ministers, a maintenance, which should be sufficient to enable them to forbear working, that is, to forbear from following any secular employment, and sufficient also to enable them "to lead about a sister, a wife†," that is, sufficient for the support of whatsoever family Providence might send them. The spirit of this passage is to be learnt from the New Testament. We should learn by it cheerfully to contribute a sufficiency of our temporal things, to those who minister to us in spiritual things; accounting ourselves to be violators of part of the Divine commandment, when we fall short in this duty; as well as unjust towards those pastors, whom God has set over us, when we refuse that measure of support, which is necessary, in our age, to constitute for them a competency.

In the ninth and following verses of this chapter, the Israelites are guarded against the abominations of the surrounding nations who had been

* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

† 1 Cor. ix. 5.

driven out: and not the least of these crimes was the practice of consulting soothsayers, and diviners, and familiar spirits. We may now consider fortune-telling as included in this prohibition; and some other kindred practices to be found amongst us,—the many impostors, who from time to time rise up, pretending to certain miraculous powers, or to supernatural communications, and who deceive many.

Let us not seek to cure diseases, or desire the knowledge of any future events, by means of presumptuous men of this class; but let us remember that GOD governs the world by the regular course of His Providence, adapting means to their respective ends; and requiring man to exercise his reason, and to employ his industry, for the attainment of all those objects, to which it is lawful for him to aspire.

PRAYER.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who hast built up Thine universal Church on the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, JESUS CHRIST Himself being the chief corner-stone, and who, by Thy Divine Providence, hast appointed divers orders of ministers to serve in Thy sanctuary, and to promote Thy glory in the edification of Thy people, teach us to reverence every holy office and ordinance, under Thy new Dispensation, as Thou didst require Thine ancient

people to reverence the services of the first sanctuary, and to respect the priestly family whom Thou didst in their days appoint to minister unto them. Grant us grace to honour in their due proportion all those whom Thou hast set over us in holy things ; and not to grudge the support which they require out of the bounty which Thou hast committed to us : but rather to feel that it is a high privilege of our stewardship to contribute to the worship of Thy House, and to be permitted to be the channels of advancing Thine honour and the good of the souls of Thy people — by supplying the wants of Thy ministers at home, and, also, by multiplying their numbers, as well as by sending forth missionaries to carry the knowledge of Thy salvation to the nations which are still in darkness.

While we are zealous for the good of others, keep us, O LORD, we beseech Thee, ever watchful over ourselves : and strengthen and direct us. that we may avoid all imitation of evil, and all conformity to the sinful customs of any, near whom we may be placed. We live in the midst of an ensnaring and ungodly world : teach us to feel that our only strength and our only hope are in Thee. Enable us to be sincere before Thee ; to avoid all approach to evil ; to shrink from temptation, fleeing to Thee for all needful grace ; and in uprightness of heart to serve Thee, and Thee only.

Thou hast favoured us with many means of grace ; and hast given us the fullest use of Thy

Blessed Book. Teach us ever to read it — and to meditate upon it — with prayer ; and, in every difficulty and in every controversy, to follow its teaching ; and by it to try the spirits whether they be of GOD : — knowing, that, while, at sundry times and in divers manners, Thou didst speak unto the fathers by the Prophets, Thou didst in the fulness of time speak unto us in these last days by Thy Son : and that Thou hast in His Gospel brought life and immortality to light ; and in Thy Holy Scriptures hast revealed to us all things necessary to our salvation. If, therefore, an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel to us, grant us grace to flee from his teaching — to Thine own Blessed Book.

O make us humbly and holy before thee, grateful for all the temporal and spiritual blessings which in our own happy land we enjoy : and teach us, reverently and thankfully, to employ them to Thy glory, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

THE END.

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